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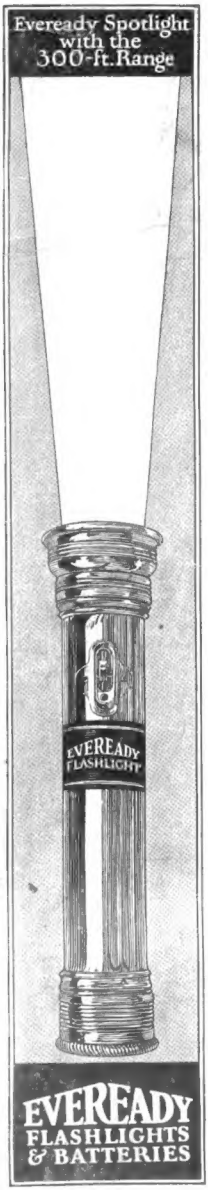

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Everybody's

NUMBER FOUR APRIL, 1923 VOLUME XLVIII

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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Claribel crossed the room and laid her hand on his shoulder. "Grant!"

("*The Moving Finger*," page 89.)

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Peter Bell Ivor *on* Broadway

A Distinguished Author Shows One Way of Getting Under the Skin of New York, Characterized by Some as the Coldest City in the World

By Samuel Merwin

THE studio was a lofty room in what had once been a stable near Washington Square. In a corner, unscreened and unashamed, a considerable number of men's suits, mostly rather gay in pattern, hung two and three to the hook, with ulsters and lighter overcoats among them, and several suits of evening clothes on frames and a great quantity of neckties. An old chiffonier overflowed with shirts, collars and underclothing. A big parcel in the Morris chair, casually torn open, could have come from nowhere but a city laundry, while the heap on the floor was unquestionably gathering for a similar journey. Two cot-beds, against east and west walls, were in a state of disorder tolerable only to the less permanent and more conspicuous inhabitants of Greenwich Village.

There were two easels—one bearing the laboriously worked-out composition of a magazine illustration, the other a black-and-white sketch of an extremely ready-made suit of clothes on a jaunty youth, evidently designed for reproduction as an advertisement. Two covered crocks and many bottles stood on the floor by the table, directly beneath a bottle-capping machine that was screwed to the wall. On the south wall, between two model-thrones, hung an immense painting, unframed, of a nude girl wearing a Quaker bonnet and carrying a parasol in an unnaturally dainty hand, smiling impudently out into the room.

The table under the great north window bore a disorderly heap of magazines and newspapers, several bottles and glasses, a cluster of thirty or forty brushes stacked in what must once have been a brass cuspidor in an American-plan hotel, and a battered chafing-dish, in which Durien, the painter, thoughtfully stirred a Welsh rabbit.

The savory odor pleasantly filled the room. Durien at intervals lifted his nose and sniffed in anticipation, then inspected the toast in the electric toaster, then glanced at the cheap alarm-clock that stood just beyond it. It was twelve-twenty. Twelve-twenty midnight, of course; were it twelve-twenty noon the breakfast coffee would be here in place of the chafing-dish and the cream would be in from the window-sill. Heaven knew when Peck would be in. Twelve was early for Peck. But he'd said twelve. Nobody but himself to blame for a cold rabbit.

The outer door opened and closed. Durien was now laying the smoking toast on the two plates. A latch-key clicked. Two men came in. One was Peck. The other wore a cap and an old army overcoat and limped slightly. Apart from these outer details of appearance, he gave out to

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the casual eye no definite impression of personality beyond a blond stubble on chin and cheeks of perhaps four days' growth and an extreme thinness that became the more marked when Peck helped him off with his coat.

Durien took in this much, and then, as if the apparition were quite in the natural order of studio life, put a third slice of bread into the toaster and got another plate and fork from the cupboard in the bathroom.

"My buddy on the Mooze," said Peck, by way of introduction, waving a slender and listless hand. "Name of Mike. Derived from favorite utterance: 'Love o' Mike!'"

Peck himself was tall, dressed with a pronounced taste for golden browns, and facially adorned with a neat little mustache that was twisted uncompromisingly up at the ends. His brown eyes, shaded by long lashes, glowed confidingly out of an oval face. In speech he was laconic.

MIKE ate enormously of the rabbit and drank largely of home-brewed ale. The three apples that Peck placed before him were devoured in swift succession. He shifted his attention next from ale to rye. And at about one-thirty Peck tucked him up in his own cot. He was, evidently, a man of few words, and those few primitive and sulphurous beyond any familiar forms of speech. Only a seasoned soldier or perhaps a seasoned lumberman of Maine, Michigan or Oregon could have withstood certain of those shyly, gratefully muttered phrases without a degree of shock. He was, indeed, somewhat abashed by the sound of his own voice, and became, as the liquor warmed him, apprehensively silent.

"How come?" asked Durien, behind a cigarette.

"Drives me home. Decrepit taxi. Recognizes me. Chirps up. We fall on each other's necks. Block up the street—taxi slows up—acts funny. We think gasoline given out—those devils in the garage always stealing it—then the old thing bucks like a bronco, shivers, bounces up in the air and stops with a bang. Engine fell out—sure!—lying there under us in the mud. We get out. Mike's speech delightful—no mere common blasphemy—quaint. The man has gifts—imagination—extraordinary. Artificial foot. The *boches* got him near Stenay. As a business man, no good. Owner of taxi sticks him thirty-two dollars for repairs last week. Allah knows what he'll stick him for this week. Completely broke. Two bananas yesterday. No food to-day. Got to do something about it."

Durien nodded, and considered the trustfully snoring object on the cot.

"Mike's no taxi-man. Square peg—you know. Personnel job, this. Morale all shot to hell now."

"Have to think," mused Durien. "For the present he can janit."

"Think harder."

"Wait! I am thinking hard. First, a confession. My name isn't Durien."

"My God—an alias!"

"Legal name, William F. Case."

"Cling, O Afrit, to Durien!"

"I mean to. Point is, I met a nut."

"Ah! Two on a twig!"

'Shut up!"

"Hearing and obeying, O Face of the Moon!"

"A philosophical nut. A Shaw in Bryant Park. Name of Ivor—Peter Bell Ivor. Found me sleeping on a bench there. Told me New York was my oyster, and, by Allah, it was! Pinned this name on me. 'William F. Case' no good for a painter. Wonderful man, Peck! Lives in an attic and reads Sanskrit and laughs at the world. Says Barnum was right. Oh, he says astonishing things! Startles you. He can do anything. Put me over in one day. Landed me with a bang. If I hadn't backslid I'd be a millionaire by now. I know he could help Mike."

"What's his game?"

"Oh, writing a book or something. Come to think of it, he told me to bring him interesting cases. Used to study books; works from the life now. Let's see—he goes out early for a walk, works in the Public Library until noon, then goes back to his room and cooks himself an omelet. Up a mile of stairs. No telephone. Take Mike there at one o'clock to-morrow."

"Dress him in garbage of my own, O Wazir?"

"Certainly not!"

"He could wear 'em."

"Present him to Mr. Ivor as war and society have made him. Set the alarm for eleven sharp. See him through."

"Hearing and obeying, O King of the Age!"

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With which the spirited and adventurous Peck prepared a bed of sorts on the floor.

One of Peck's razors, wielded by Mike in what was euphemistically alluded to in this neighborhood as "the morning," discovered a sensitive face, inclining defensively to the furtive eyes of a faded blue illuminated by no flickerings of a hopeful spirit, and a thin mouth that drooped at the corners. His mood approached enthusiasm only while his two hosts exhibited a boyish interest in the artificial foot. Attired in a union suit of Peck's, he paraded about the studio, exhibiting his skill in manipulating it. It was one thing his country had done for him, and the momentary importance of it was pleasant to a beaten spirit. The other note of excitement, that ran like a bright thread through the confused fabric of his unformed mind, rose from that astonishing painting of the unclad girl in the funny little bonnet. He couldn't very well speak of it until one of them did. Not very well. And, anyway, he had to be careful with what little he did say—his remarks all sounded so uncomfortably rough. He knew he'd burst into uproarious laughter once they did speak of it. They were the cute ones, those two! Some goings-on here now and then. He'd say so!

HAD Mike heard Durien's estimate of a mile of stairs, he would have felt inclined to set it down as understatement. As he explained hesitatingly, with a gently muttered expletive that shall not be written here and that reverberated in his own ears, shocking him into silence, the foot worked harder on stairs.

In a dark hallway Durien knocked, and then, when a deep voice sounded welcome, opened a door.

"This," said Durien, indicating his studiomate, "is Peck. And the other one is Mike. He's the problem we thought perhaps you'd —Mike is, I mean."

"Difficulty is, Mike's an idealist," Peck put in. "And this is not a good town for idealists."

"Indeed it is not!" sounded the deep voice. "Won't you gentlemen be seated?"

Mike, who had lingered timidly in the doorway, was taking in the tall figure of Peter Bell Ivor—a figure very tall and very thin, attired in a rusty cutaway coat that was bound about the edges with fraying braid, and in gray trousers that bagged in comfort at the knees and fringed out just below the shoe-tops. The shoes were the kind with elastic sides known to their forefathers (but not to themselves) as "Congress gaiters." And he wore a stiff high collar and a stringy tie, in which was stuck, however, a remarkable scarab set in old gold. Peck's eyes lingered on that scarab. The impressive element in the appearance of this Old-Worldly figure was undoubtedly the severely spare face beneath a bald dome of a forehead that towered over even the well-grown Peck—a face with the fulness between nose and chin that, to the observant, indicates aggressive strength, contrasting oddly with the reflective calm that dwelt above it, and with quietly determined eyes peering out through unusually heavy lenses that were set in gold frames.

In his proper setting, here in this attic room, the man could be described as a quaint figure indeed. Two walls were lined to the ceiling with books—old books in tattered calf and dingy buckram, evidently in many languages. Other books were heaped about a littered lot of papers and writing-materials on a rickety card-table. In a corner a few white dishes could be seen between curtains of burlap. There was a bureau with a cracked mirror, a pine bed, two cane-seated chairs and an old walnut wash-stand with a tin ice-box on the floor beside it. The single window framed a picture of other back windows and rusty fire-escapes, all crowded with jars and milk-bottles and bedding, and a web of clothes-lines.

The two chairs presented a momentary difficulty as seating-places for four men. But Peck enthusiastically solved the little problem by dragging Mike, who hung back quite like a bewildered child, to one of them, and then draping himself comfortably on one side of the bed.

"Buddy of mine on the Mooze," he explained. "Lost his foot at Stenay. Got a remarkable new one. Let the gentleman see it, Mike."

The wholly confused Mike was about to obey when Durien, appropriating the other side of the bed, spoke up with emphasis.

"That's not quite the idea, Peck. You see, Mr. Ivor, you told me, that time you straightened me out, to bring you any cases that——"

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Peter Bell Ivor, standing before the window, hands clasped behind his back, looking keenly down on them, broke in with:

"Yes. I recall that." He centered his gaze on the blushing Mike. "And this is a case?"

"Yes. You see——"

"One moment!" Ivor seated himself deliberately at the table. "Just answer my questions, please. What is his occupation?"

"Taxi-driver. But——"

"The man that owns it"—this from Peck—"stuck him thirty-two dollars——"

"Business has been rotten——"

"The fellows in the garage steal his gasoline——"

"If you please!" Ivor lifted an authoritative hand. "One thing at a time. I am to understand that you, Mr. Peck, have——"

"Old buddy drives me home. Car dies on us. Picture me bawling him out. He chirps up. I——"

"Please! You recognized in him an army acquaintance, crippled now and in trouble."

"That's it! I'm his first fare all day. You see, it's an awful taxi. Poor devil gets no food yesterday. Two bananas the day before. And——"

"I must—really—approach this case in an orderly manner. I gather that you took him in for the night and gave him food."

HERE, suddenly, the emotions of the case found impulsive utterance.

"I'll say so!" he cried in a surprisingly large voice, and then, as abruptly, turning bright red, clamped his lips shut on further enthusiastic language that unmistakably wouldn't do.

The fire burned brightly on in his face, however, as he considered his narrow escape from uttering those ear-blasting phrases. They'd have sounded all right in Flanders, just sort of human and natural and friendly, but not here. No; not here—not with old Four-eyes staring at him through those thick glasses. He didn't know that armies before our own have sworn horribly in Flanders. He only knew that nothing he could say would be right, and that therefore the thing to do was to shut his trap and keep it shut. Say "Yes sir" and "No sir" and "Very good sir" and step damn careful.

Old Four-eyes was fairly upon him now. He quailed, then gathered himself to resist a wholly new kind of shock. Queer game, this! Mr. Peck, he'd have to trust anywhere. And the Mr. Durien was a gent through and through—one of God's noblemen. But it was a queer game, all right.

"What do you want?" The tall man with the dome fired the question like a howitzer-shot.

"Why—why nothing—Mr. Peck he——"

"He wants a chance to live." This from Durien, who felt himself to be, in a sense, stage-manager of the little scene.

"Please!" Then, the stage-manager silenced, Mr. Ivor seated himself at the table and spoke to the case in a gentler tone. "I want you to understand, Mike"—this unexpected informality helped a good deal—"that I will be glad to help you. Not"—this with that arresting hand again in air—"with any idea of putting you under a sentimental obligation to me. Not at all!"

It was plain that the case couldn't quite assimilate the larger words, but Mr. Ivor, sensing the fact, promptly adapted his speech to the situation.

"Here you are, Mike, broke——"

"I'll say so!"

"With only one good foot. Heavy work out of question."

"Right-o!" Mike had fought in a British sector in 'Seventeen, and fell with some relief on what he felt to be a knowing way of putting things.

"In fact, you're out of luck all round."

"I'll say so!"

"What kinds of work have you done before this?"

"Only taxi-drivin'. And once I was chauffure for seven months. This fellow I work for, he rents me the taxi and he's a——"

Hot phrases were forming again and memories of severe self-restraint while on orderly duty and on kitchen-police were rising to the rescue in that small part of his brain with which he might be said to have some personal acquaintance. He went on, therefore, deliberately, guardedly, weighing each word and phrase before letting it go, and knotting his brows painfully during the struggle. Speak—and speak fully—he must. Bitterness tinged darkly the bewilderment of his spirit. But these men were kind. The food and the drink and the

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soft cot had warmed his heart. Somewhere hereabout, incredibly, was hope. And this wholly new, warm feeling was from moment to moment melting away the crust in which he lived these days. Yes; it was all coming out. He knew it—felt, even, a thought frightened about it, but was helpless before the fact.

"I bums round a while after I gets out of the army—out o' luck; you said it!—feeds in the bread-line over on the Bowery—some o' the boys was gettin' pretty rough, stickin' up pay-rolls—and some o' 'em picks up a lot—you'd be surprised—cleanin' out fruit and candy stores and gas-stations. They wants me in on a job—now, you know I ain't namin' anybody, but I guess everybody knows there's rough stuff goin' on. So that bunch gets sore; guess they was thinkin' I'd be makin' trouble—so I bums round the West Side and up-town, and one day I and a fellow drivin' a taxi gets talkin', and he says, 'Why don't you get somethin' over to our garage.'

"So I goes over there and they gives me this taxi to drive—it's nothin' but a box of junk, and the fellow he charges me rent and repairs, anything he likes, the old—keeps me owin' him money. Well, I sees pretty soon there's a lot of good-lookin' cars runnin' into that place and out again, and one night they's paintin' a big new limousine and I hears a little o' what they're sayin', and last week they puts it up to me to dress me up swell and send me out on a car-stealin' job for fifty dollars.

"Well, you see, I may be a rough egg, but I never pulled any o' that stuff yet, and I don't want to say anythin' that'll get 'em sore. So I just stalls 'em off and says I don't like to take chances with this bum foot—can't run if I have to, you know—but I can see they's watchin' me and they talks about me to the cop, and, o' course, they'll frame me in a minute if they— Oh well, they ain't a thing I can do about that. So I just sort of hangs on until somethin' else turns up—you know how it is, sir.

"Of course they's always a big pile you can make bootleggin' these days—two of the fellows in my first company up north o' Saint Quentin"—pronounced to rime with "went in"—"when we was with the Canadians—they're gettin' rich as—well, sir, and a couple o' the revenue men talks to me two weeks ago because one of those fellows says they'd be glad to do somethin' for me and they'd give me the right to sell one of the big office-buildin's. But they's a bum lot o' yeggs and cheap stool-pigeons workin' for that crowd, and they'd just as soon plug a fellow as not—shoot in a second, those birds, and, anyway, sir, it's us little fellows they drop on when they want a goat. So I stalls them off, too—you see, they always fix it so they get it on you, and you can't call your soul your own—gotta do everything they say and then like as not get five years up the river when they want to make a play— I'll tell you, sir, I don't know what a fellow's goin' to do—maybe I'm nothin' but a damn fool—sometimes I think so— As I says before, there don't seem to be a thing to do but sorta hang on from day to day——"

His voice had risen gradually during this long narrative, and his eyes were brighter.

It was Peck—a rather excited Peck—who broke in at this point with a sudden recollection:

"Mike, where's your medal?"

"That? Oh, I got it in my pocket," murmured the case, abashed again.

"Let's have a look at it."

Hesitatingly Mike produced a grimy, much folded bit of newspaper, which the alert Peck, on his feet now, snatched up and opened for Mr. Ivor, spread it out on the rickety table. There, on the paper that was grimy in the creases with gear-oil, lay a Congressional Medal of Honor, somewhat dingy, and with a little of the grease thumbed into the white of the ribbon.

"There you are!" cried Peck, serious all through and a thought self-conscious about it. "There's your Medal of Honor—and there sits Mike! What are we going to do about him?"

MR. IVOR leaned back in the insecure little chair, pursed his lips, tapped thoughtfully on the table, glanced at his watch—a large watch in what our fathers knew as a "hunting-case"—then finally burrowing through the litter of papers before him and discovering a small box of cards of the sort called in offices a "tickler" and consulting it.

Durien stared anxiously. Peck, standing over the table, followed every little

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movement with a sensitively mobile face. The case twisted his cap round and round in his fingers.

Mr. Ivor next lifted a box from the floor that was absurdly like a younger brother of the tin ice-box and took out a little book, evidently a pass-book from a savings-bank —which he studied a moment before putting it away in a breast-pocket and buttoning tightly over it the curious old coat. And then, at last, he looked up.

"All right," he said; "I will give you a little time."

"What can we do?" asked the excited Peck.

"I haven't an idea."

"But, good Lord——"

The bony hand was raised again.

"Please! The case interests me. The means we may employ will have to be determined as we go along. I don't think it will be difficult. Mike has discovered the real New York. And now that he has found it, he doesn't know what to do with it. We'll see if we can't show him. Come, please!"

With which, he took from a hook behind a curtain a rusty old derby hat and, with a courtesy not of the present century, bowed them out.

He led them first to a savings-bank. Here Peck, unused to surrendering his rather humorous spirit of leadership, spoke up.

"If it's to come to a question of money, Mr. Ivor, you must allow us——"

"No. I have managed to put aside a small sum for my research work, Mr. Peck. And Mike will pay me back anything I may——"

"But what'll he use for money?"

"Oh, Mike will have money enough."

"But in heaven's——"

"If you please, I'd much rather not be questioned while I am thinking out this little problem. You can get anything you want in New York—whenever you want it. It's a city of six million children wholly governed and robbed at will by a few thousand primitive individuals who know what they want. Your friend Mike has given you a better statement of the facts than he will ever know. His little difficulty is simply that he is a decent young man, with instincts adapted to what we think of as civilization, turned loose in a city that isn't civilized at all. Naturally, in such a community, civilized feelings are a grave handicap. It is because I, too, have them that I live in an attic and cook my own meals. A touch of real civilization undermines the primitive courage and weakens the primitive will.

"The successful men are invariably unspoiled by civilized instincts. They are the splendid primitive animals. There are intermediate types, of course—men who serve the successful grabbers. It is these intermediates—the lawyers and engineers and executive lieutenants in business and politics and college presidents and certain of the clergy—who, because they are not themselves grabbers, spin an atmosphere of apparent civilization about their mighty patrons. But we are not to be deceived by that atmosphere. It is self-evident that such a condition could not exist if the six million were of even average intelligence. They are not. They are children, and must be treated as children. We put ourselves, you see, in the position of those splendid grabbers. We will humor these children, do with them as we like, and they will give us anything we choose to take. It is really quite simple. I asked Mike what he wants. He doesn't seem to know."

"Well, hell—" This abrupt phrase fairly burst out from the utterly confused case.

"It's all right, Mike." Ivor laid a hand on his shoulder. "I'm going to do your wanting and your thinking for you. Wait just a moment, please." And this truly astonishing person strode with dignity to a place in the line by the paying-window, leaving the case muttering in unconsciously vivid language, while Durien nodded sagely and Peck leaned comically against a wall desk and fanned himself with his hat.

"AND now," remarked Mr. Ivor cheerfully, standing on the outer steps of the bank, "where do you keep your taxi?"

"In a garage on the West Side; but——"

"Suppose we go there first."

"But"—this was Peck—"he had to leave it in Macdougal Street last night. The——"

"In Macdougal Street?"

"Yes; the——"

"The engine fell out," put in Durien.

"Ah! Indeed?" Ivor was wrinkling his

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brows. "Come," he added; "we will go right down there."

And he led them, striding firmly and long, toward the nearest subway station.

Twenty minutes later they stood under the windows of a spaghetti restaurant in a crowd of ragged little Italians and ragged medium-sized Italians gazing at the wreck of the most completely decrepit taxi-cab, doubtless, in New York city. One rear wheel was tilted up. Under there, in the mud, lay a battered old four-cylinder motor. The door-glass was broken; the leather curtains were torn; the wind-shield was cracked; the mud-guards were crushed in.

"I think we may be able to do something with it," mused Ivor. "Yes, surely! Oh, yes, indeed!"

"You've got me going, Mr. Ivor," said Durien. "I would like to know what you can do with that."

The case had drawn Peck aside.

"Look here," said that thin comedian, returning; "Mike's up against it for fair. He says the old crook that runs the garage'll stick him hundreds of dollars for this—hold it over him."

"Oh, that's all right!" observed Mr. Ivor cheerfully. Indeed, he was distinctly brightening from moment to moment.

"But the whole thing isn't worth fifty dollars as it stands!" cried Durien.

"We'll attend to all that. I really mustn't give you any more time than is necessary. Jack it up, Mike, and we'll get it off the motor. No; we can lift it. You buy a paper, Durien, and spread it on the floor inside. We'll put the motor right in there. Wait a moment now. Let me think. It really should be no problem at all. Once I— I'll tell you! Suppose you, Mr. Peck, find us a horse."

"But where on——"

"Look up livery-stables in the classified directory. There must be a few liveries left in New York. But, no—I'll tell you—get a mule!"

"A *what?*"

"A mule. Harnessed up for driving. Possibly a contracting firm would rent one out. If you have to go any distance, take a taxi. And keep track of any small money you may spend. Mike will pay everything back. And buy a little rope—about three-eighths-inch rope. Hurry, please!"

For a moment Peck stared into the serious face of the unmistakably earnest Mr. Ivor, and then, very slowly, an expression of pleasure crept into his own face, passing swiftly on into delight.

"Hearing and obeying, O Wazir!" he murmured, and swiftly was gone.

Mr. Ivor took off his coat then. With help from the crowd, the three of them lifted the car along and put the incredibly greasy and muddy motor within.

"Now, let me think," mused Mr. Ivor aloud. "You want some money, of course. But in your case that's rather incidental. It won't take us long to pick up all we'll need. The principal question is, Mike: Are you a good soldier?"

The case, blushing, finally admitted that he was.

"Very good! It all hangs on that. Will you accept me as your patron for this afternoon? Good! I warn you it may be rough going at times. But here are your orders: Whatever happens, keep your mouth shut. You may be arrested. Indeed, I think it more than likely. We may all be arrested. But that doesn't matter. I'll get you out. But don't talk. Keep cool; take whatever comes, and leave the rest to me. Just as if you were captured at the front. Steady all the time. Remember, all these New York people are children. The police, above all, are children. They couldn't think if they wanted to. The laws are there to take the place of human brains. All sorts of laws—contradictory, fanatical, many that nobody understands—enough laws to govern all the known planets at once. As a people, we're probably funniest in our legislation. However, the time has come when you've got to obey orders and go through like a soldier. You see, I don't know yet just how I'm going to handle it. I'll have to take it from moment to moment— Let me think. Fifth Avenue, the Plaza at Fifty-ninth, the—no; Times Square's the place! Yes; that's it! Times Square!"

IT WAS nearing four o'clock in Times Square, and the sunlight, slanting downward over and through the skeleton structures of the incredibly elaborate electric signs and between the theatres and picture-houses and hotels and the warrenlike structures that house ticket and theatrical agencies and lawyers and manicurists and

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red chop-suey restaurants lodged over white eating-places of a less antipodal flavor touched benignly the swarms of pedestrians and the amazing other swarms of limousines and town cars and touring cars and taxi-cabs and mail-trucks. That September sunlight even descended pleasantly here and there upon little areas of the pavement itself and momentarily warmed them. And it was reflected brilliantly by the myriad windows of the immense other hotels and theatres and office-buildings that line the western length of the square, adding an even gayer brightness to the froth-tipped waves of humanity that surged to and fro down there, and swirled in little currents about the gigantic door-men before the hotels and about those other stalwart giants, the traffic policemen, who, at the sound of a master-whistle, bade the waves stand back with a confidence no Canute ever earned.

ACTORS stood calmly along the curb, jostled by heedless crowds. Flappers, muffled round the neck with pretty furs but almost skirtless below; slouched along by twos and threes, or, in narrower predatory mood, singly with a chosen man. Curious, swarthy, remarkably little men, but shapely, gathered about the doorways where the vaudeville agencies would be—dancers and singers and tricksters of that other and remote planet, the amusement world. Undistinguished citizens of all ages—except the old—and of both sexes poured by endlessly or drifted in minor streams into and out of the many doors. Pompous young men emerged from the more costly restaurants and in splendid carelessness signaled for taxis. Statuesque young women, like the flappers nearly skirtless but muffled at the neck—young women with exquisitely enameled complexions and skilfully tinted hair—moved magnificently by, expensively escorted or alone. Older, fat women, who must once upon a time have been statuesque, waddled by with heavily powdered double chins and rouged, wrinkled temples and, by way of a lingering sunset glory, bright straw-colored hair that appeared of an oddly chemical tinge in the high lights and drably dark at the roots.

Up into this area of display and extravagance, up Broadway, past the dingy structure that in a golden age was Daly's Theatre, past the memory that was Wallack's and the other memory that was Weber and Field's, past theatres that are not yet quite gone by, past the barnlike brick opera-house and, across the way, beyond the Empire, the door that once had given into the Knickerbocker bar (that would be in the mellower time of the "Forty-second Street Country Club," peace to its dregs!), waiting soberly its turn while the cross-town traffic roared by and then crawling on northward, keeping, as was proper in so slow-moving a vehicle, close to the right-hand curb, came the battered wreck of a taxi drawn forlornly by a rat-colored mule and driven by a thin-faced young man in a cap and an old army overcoat who held the reins in one hand and operated the steering-wheel with the other.

Beside him sat a dignified Old-Worldly scholar in a tightly buttoned cutaway coat and a rusty derby hat. On the rear seat—the top was down—two eager-eyed young men of fashion sat with their knees high in air. Small boys followed, nimbly evading the inconsiderate cars and trucks that twisted by. The sidewalk crowd thickened everywhere as the odd cavalcade passed. And above the constant, confused noise of the street, voices could be heard in humorous and derisive comment.

A traffic officer gazed after it and rubbed his chin, spoke to his fellow, who shrugged; and so the comic little problem moved of itself into the bailiwick of the men on the corner next up-town.

Mr. Ivor was speaking earnestly, with a trace of color over his cheek-bones.

"I warn you all"—thus his fervent speech—"that not one of you has ever embarked on a more serious undertaking than this. A single ill-advised laugh—even a smile—will destroy our purpose. As for all these"—and he waved a hand toward the screaming gamins and the laughing, jeering multitude on the sidewalk—"remember they are children. All—the business men, the police, the young people—all children. We shall play upon their feelings as we like. They will be putty in our hands. You *must* understand this—hold it firmly in your minds. There is nothing in the slightest degree absurd in our present course. It is, indeed, the only completely rational thing to do. You cannot reason with New Yorkers. They care nothing for truth, even for facts. New Yorkers don't

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care how many service-men starve. What they want is amusement, entertainment, little surprises, fresh toys. Give them these, and they'll repay you out of all reason."

At Forty-third Street a policeman made his way among the waiting cars.

"Well," he asked briskly, but with a knowing reticence, "how about it? Where are you taking this outfit?"

"We're turning off at Forty-fifth Street," said Mr. Ivor, with a note of authority in his deep voice that brought the eyes of the officer swiftly up from the patiently attending mule. He considered now the strong face and the eyes behind the thick lenses and the derby hat. Then he took in the set profile of the demobilized soldier at the wheel, and the two youths in the rear, who probably were students, and the absurd old motor under their feet.

"You know you can't block traffic with a fool outfit like this. What do you think you're going to do in Forty-fifth Street?"

"I may have to speak briefly," said Mr. Ivor, a note of tremulous emotion evident in his resonant voice.

The officer considered him again, then, as the whistle blew, waved him on. He should worry. He rather wished he might wander up the block if only to see how Barney O'Hare at the Forty-fifth Street crossing would handle the outfit. It was a queer one. And, at least, Barney didn't have to keep a gangway for mail-trucks.

BARNEY O'HARE, in his turn—six-foot two and a quarter was Barney as God made him, without the thickness of a sock between heels and floor—a discus-thrower of Olympian reputation and rough-handed master of a nerve-wrecking crossing—winked at a locally famous press-agent and walked over after the surprising equipage as it turned into the side-street and pulled in by the curb. Pedestrians, chauffeurs, occupants of limousines and street-cars were turning to look and laugh. By the time Barney O'Hare had elbowed through the swift-gathering crowd, the tall person in the queer old cutaway suit had stepped out on the running-board and removed his derby hat.

"Ladies and gentlemen—" he began in a ringing voice. The glint of authority hardened his eyes. His slender body was set, not stiffly but easily, in the posture of command; this you felt in the look of his shoulders, in the poise of his head and in the grave benediction of his upraised hand.

"You can't talk here, my friend," observed the forthright O'Hare.

"I can, and I will," replied Ivor, firmly meeting his gaze.

"Show me your permit."

"The law entitles me to speak for three minutes without a permit."

Officer O'Hare swiftly considered the crazy vehicle, the rat-colored mule—of all things!—and the nervous, thin boy in the army overcoat and the two young Willies-off-the-yacht in the back seat with their feet on a four-cylinder engine—these, too, had bared their heads and were gazing up solemnly at the shining dome of Mr. Ivor—and then, as swiftly, but vainly, tried to place this strange being among the wide variety of human types with which his memory was stocked.

"Ladies and gentlemen——"

"You can't get away with this. Look at the street!"

Durien looked. It was packed from the building-line to the opposite curb with inquisitive humans.

But Mr. Ivor didn't waver for an instant. His eyes, through the thick lenses, struck fire at the policeman.

"You'd better listen, Officer," he said in that curious tone of command. "What I've got to say is important." Then, "Mike, hand me that medal."

"For the love o'——"

"Orders! Quickly, please!"

Unhappily, Mike dug it from his pocket, and Ivor stripped off the greasy paper. He held up the medal.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is the Medal of Honor. This boy here won it in France. He lost a foot at Stenay. Or have you forgotten about France? No? Good! He rents this taxi from a thieving garage-man, who robs him, keeps him in debt. He's not much of a business man, Mike isn't. Last night the motor fell through the chassis. Mr. Peck, show them the motor." Peck and Durien opened the doors. "The boy has no money; he couldn't get fares with this old machine——"

"I don't wonder!" cried the locally famous press-agent, who had penetrated the crowd in the seething wake of Officer

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O'Hare. He was gazing up at the speaker with an expression in which envy played some part.

"And now he's going to be robbed again to pay for this wreck. And I'll tell you why. They're trying to discourage him and then make a car thief of him. Yes; an automobile thief. They offer him fifty dollars a car. Here he sits—and he doesn't like this talk a bit—" It was clear enough that he didn't; he was squirming redly down as if he hoped to hide in that conspicuous front seat. "Here's the man who lost a foot at Stenay and won the Congressional Medal of Honor, and can't earn a living in this civilized town of yours. Oh, he can make money fast enough if he'll steal autos or go into store-breaking or bootlegging; but he can't make a straight living! And he won't beg. But I will! I want five hundred dollars to clear him from the wreck of this damn car and buy him some clothes and start him right. Five hundred dollars! No more—that's enough. We'll get him a job then, and he'll pay his way as a self-respecting citizen."

"Look here—" began Barney O'Hare.

"Hurry it up! Peck—Durien—hold out your hats! The officer is right; we mustn't block this street a minute longer than we can help. Quick—here are three hats—throw in your money and move right along."

"Blest if it isn't the old high-pitch spiel with modern improvements," remarked the press-agent to O'Hare. The officer scowled in thought. During a brief instant the crowd, fascinated though it was as an unreasoning mass, hesitated.

MIKE himself unwittingly turned the tide. The color surged in full flood over his face. The thin underlip quivered and the blue eyes flashed fire. Language suddenly began to flow from that sensitive mouth—vivid, primitive, old Anglo-Saxon sounds—softly, because Mike was shy at heart, even now when he was blazing mad. He couldn't have helped reaching out and clutching at Mr. Ivor to draw him back if it had been his last act. An unexpected development of that little situation was that Mr. Ivor, despite his fifty or more years and his scholarly air, proved a fellow of wiry strength. He resisted stoutly. Without even dropping his hat, he forced the young man back. Peck, too, leaning forward, exerted pressure on his shoulders.

Then the thought of flight came to the boy. He relaxed his grip, turned, and with a wild look started out over the running-board. Peck, leaping then through an open door, caught him round the waist. And the crowd closed in.

"Careful!" cried Peck lustily. "Remember his game foot!"

"You can't go, Mike!" shouted the determined Mr. Ivor. "You gave your word you'd be a soldier."

Sheepishly, wretchedly, Mike slipped back into his seat.

Money was jingling and fluttering into the three hats. Mike stared at the mule. Officer O'Hare cried:

"You've got to move on! You can't stay here like this! Get along now!" But even as Officer O'Hare spoke thus sternly, Barney O'Hare, the Irishman, dropped a dollar furtively into the nearest hat.

Mike chirped up the rat-colored mule. The sorry equipage crawled toward Sixth Avenue. The crowd moved good-humoredly with it. The money continued to jingle and flutter into the hats.

"Here, boys!" It was the envious press-agent, walking with breathless difficulty beside the car. "Just turn to the right on Sixth. You won't pick up much this way. But stop a minute across from the Hippodrome and I'll fix you up. I'll get on ahead now. But wait for me there. Just opposite." He pushed vigorously through the crowd and disappeared ahead.

When they pulled up, he was waiting on the curb with four painted and costumed girls right off the stage. Peck and Durien gave hats and places to them and walked bareheaded just behind. The girls smiled and ogled and winsomely called out for help. The unrelenting Ivor, from the front seat, gave them their cues and himself addressed each addition to the crowd. At Forty-second Street they were throwing money into the car. It jingled down through that greasy motor and lay in heaps on the floor and bounced about the seat-cushion and slipped down the cracks.

Ivor finally struggled to stop them. And, pulling up before a day-and-night bank—it was well after hours now—he went in for canvas bags while Peck and Durien and the somewhat relieved Mike first took up the

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seat and cleaned it of cash, then replaced it, lifted the motor upon it and scooped all of the collection together on the floor. And still the amused and excited crowd rained it in there. And the four girls, from the curb, mischievously egged them on.

On his return, with a policeman from the bank, Ivor found the press-agent and two or three young men who couldn't have been any sort but reporters skilfully emptying the heads of Peck and Durien of all they contained at the moment.

"And just who is this gentleman?" the press-agent was asking, indicating Mr. Ivor.

"Not one word!" cried that austere person, nearer anger than the younger men would have thought possible. "No one is to have my name! Be clear, please, on that point. I do not appear in this——"

"But if you'd just give us your 'phone-number," pressed a reporter, "in case——"

"I have no telephone!" thundered the master of ceremonies. "And I know this young man would greatly prefer being let alone. He doesn't want publicity."

"I don't quite see how you're going to keep a thing like this out of the papers, sir." This a reporter. "It's a Sunday feature—that's what it is. That about plenty of jobs bootlegging and stealing cars, but no chance of a decent living."

"What he wants is a job. Chauffeur. A good job, with people who will treat him with consideration and not look for heavy work from a man with one foot."

"He'll have all of that," put in the press-agent. "I'm making that my first business in the morning. Address at Mr. Peck's studio, you say?"

"Yes; he's living with me," said Peck.

"AND now, O Avenger of the Faithful," continued that debonair personage, happy as only a real New Yorker can be happy in the fulness of a conspicuous task conspicuously done—he was addressing thus the unbending Peter Bell Ivor—"how about the li'l old motor and the li'l old mule?"

Ivor thought a moment.

"We'll leave the car here," he said. "I'll call up that garage thief and tell him where he can find it. I will also give him your address. He will be around before seven o'clock after money. I'm beginning to think we'd better not give him any. Better for him, I think. Oh, yes, surely! If he should become very troublesome, send him to me."

"And I'll take care of the mule!" cried the now smiling press-agent. "My company will be glad to meet any little expense. Just give me the address of the stable."

And he led the mule up Sixth Avenue, while the girls followed, giggling, in their paint and costumes, along the sidewalk.

Mr. Ivor telephoned firmly from a booth in a drug store,; and then said:

"I will leave you young gentlemen now. I have given you four hours. But at least I have again demonstrated perfectly my axiom."

But, first, Peck, lighting cigarettes for the young three of them, said in his buoyant way,

"But tell me, O King of the Age, why you won't let the papers have your name?"

The austere face clouded. And then this older man stared up between the grimy front of a building and the grimier structure of the elevated railway into a narrow strip of thin and distant sky.

"I cannot have my name used," he said, not without a tinge of bitterness in the vibrant voice. "I must not be known."

"But you could so easily do anything—have everything——"

"Exactly! 'Do' and 'have!' I will not 'do,' and I must not 'have.' Do you know, young man, what it means to think? To follow with the sharp instinct of a homing bee an invisible thread of thought without diversion or distraction? To think through to a conclusion, regardless of mob unreason and herd philosophy, fully, profoundly, with every hidden factor brought up and woven into its place? Do you know that hardly one man in a century can think?

"'Do!' 'Have!' Exactly! All my fortitude and all my skill are needed to remain obscure and poor. If I am not uncannily careful, I shall, through one of my strokes, become rich overnight."

"But, good God——"

"That would be so pitifully easy. But I must live apart."

They left him there, standing grimly on the curb while a grimy train roared by overhead—left him with awe in their hearts and with jokes of him on their lips that curdled in the air before their wondering young faces.

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When he had finished the *seguidillas*, the girl had run to him and clung to him passionately.

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Carole

The Redemption of Two Strange Characters—a Dancer Whose Eyes, Whose Limbs Sang Songs, and a Violinist Who Could Play Like a God or a Devil

By Sampson Raphaelson

Illustrations by Joseph Reeves

THE landlady and the drummer who played with Penco in the orchestra of the Blue Moon Cabaret found him dead in his room on Macdougal Street. The old man's body was prone on the bed. The landlady, who is unimaginative, noted that there was still the reek of liquor about him. The drummer, who had been in awe and terror of the old man for months, and who had on occasion a morbid fancy, said:

"My God! He looks like a chink this time—a high-class chink! I seen him look like a Spaniard, and like a Jew, and like a Gipsy, and last night, ma'am—believe me or not—I seen him the living picture of Jesus Christ——"

They buried old Penco, and the Blue Moon got a new fiddler. Only one person showed emotion at the time of his passing, and that was the drummer; and his emotion did not last very long, nor was it very deep. And only one person suffered sorrow because old Penco had died, and that was La Chota—a world-famed dancer, an Oriental and a great woman in society—who heard about it months later, when she had become well from a serious illness.

They buried Penco, and the last material remnants of his personality went when the landlady burned his meager effects. These consisted of a few faded letters written in Spanish in a woman's hand, and an autographed inscription in Arabic across a scratched and shabby picture post-card of a girl in the costume of the Indian bayaderes.

If the beautiful woman, who once had been that bayadere girl, had known this, it would have meant a great deal to her. She always remembered what he had said to her fifteen years before, in Paris, when they first had known each other:

"Wait, my darling; wait and look about. Your instinct tells you that we were meant for each other. But you cannot follow your instinct, as I cannot follow mine. for the Fates have been ironical. They have waited thousands of years to create you for me and me for you, and then by a handful of years they have cheated us. But perhaps they haven't cheated *you*. There may be another such as I. Wait!" He had added: "You are pure. Debauchery is shameful; recklessness is weak. and passion is a mistake. I know. Make your waiting beautiful—austere."

"It shall be as noble as I can make it," she had replied.

This you must believe: that from the first, from his very childhood, Penco had a great talent for loving. Almost ninety years ago, a vivid-faced youngster, olive in complexion but with intensely blue eyes, he made a traveling band of Gipsies famous and welcome in Brittany. This was at St. Herbot, near Morlaix. He was known as "Gyphtoi-Penco" then, which would indicate that the Gipsies had picked him up in Greece. With the orchestra of Breton peasants sitting round the moss-grown dolmen, the whole Gipsy band began to dance, and many of the Breton peasants danced, too.

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But soon they all ceased, in order to watch the six-year-old Gyphtoi. "For," they said, "this is not mere dancing—the child loves us all, and he loves the sky and the trees, too, and the flowers and the waters."

The orchestra had been playing that curious old tune, "The Wine of the Gauls and the Dance of the Sword." To this music, plaintive as the melodies one hears to-day in synagogues and brave with a gaiety almost Irish, the child danced so that the peasants did not let him stop until he sank to the ground, his body shaking with sobs.

For many years after he continued to be known as "Gyphtoi-Penco," and, although his brother and sister Gipsies had come from Hungary originally and should have been named "Pharaoh-Nepek," they were soon called "Gyphtoi," after him.

When he was fifteen years old, in Spain, the home of the dance, among the orange groves and vineyards, he became almost an idol. It is told to-day how, after dancing the *seguidillas* so that even the Cadiz dancing girls were shamed, he swung into the center of the circle of his band and introduced the old French *carole*. For a week he had been carrying on a mad, swift love-affair with one of the Cadiz girls, and when he had finished the *seguidillas*, the girl, completely out of herself, had run to him and clung to him passionately.

He had stood for a moment, brooding, and then, gently disengaging her arms, had begun the *carole*.

The *seguidillas* is a dance of suppleness, with *nuances* of mad, delicious sensuality. The old French *carole*, on the other hand, is a Christmas dance—rollicking, wholesome and quaint. It smacks of Yule-tide and hearth-fires, and of good will toward men. When rightly done, it has a quality of radiance. The transition from the alluring *seguidillas* to the humane yet fairylike *carole* as it was made by Gyphtoi-Penco was novel and breathless to all the beholders but the girl, who was first surprised, then perplexed, then sulky. Penco, who was watching her, turned more and more to the others, and finally, during a slow movement, he came near her and spoke a few words in her ear which made her turn away and depart. This is told about to this day by *doñas*, who had it of their mothers, who had it of traveling dancers who had seen it. And then Penco, they will tell you, continued with the *carole*, and when he was through the spirit of the assembled crowds was changed from the fury and ardor of their native dance to a spirit of sweetness, of gentleness and of merriment. The guitars and castanets were silenced, the story goes, and the women swung from the *taconeo*—the marking of time with the feet—into a wide, circular swing of the body which, the *doñas* relate, was something that never before, and surely never since has been observed in Spain.

BUT there was a bitterness in Penco for years after that whenever he felt the magnetism of a woman, and he felt this magnetism often. He went about for a while with the Gipsy band, but soon he left them, impatient. He himself does not remember all the things he did in those years. For a while he was in Bombay, where, among the nautch-girls, the Gyphtoi orgies are to this day talked about. It was in a brawl there that he became crippled. One leg was permanently lamed—and he began to rely solely on his violin.

It might have been his deformity, or it might have been a sudden maturing and a wearying of Oriental pleasures, but when he was twenty-three he appeared in St. Petersburg, where he studied the violin under Wieniawski for a year and then startled the world by his first concert before the Imperial Opera. In the St. Petersburg newspaper files you can find descriptions of him and his playing in those days. He is described as a slender youth with a long, thin face, slits for eyes, and a crooked mouth. One critic suggested that he might have been taken for an Oriental until, when playing certain passages, he would open his eyes wide, and his eyes were blue and large, like those of an English youth. His playing was described as uncanny. Technically, it seems that it was full of flaws, yet the critics said they had never heard such genius.

Penco seems to have spoken to La Chota often and in detail about the years which came immediately after.

"In that year when I studied the violin as the teachers play it," he told her, "I did nothing but play by day and night, and think when I could not play, and when I could not think, I slept. I read some books, also, but I have never learned to care for

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reading, and the things which were in the books sounded ridiculous. People did things in these books which I could not understand or respect. I talked to some students at first, but they were almost as preposterous as the books. They were ruled by what other people thought—society, they called it. I asked them what it was that other people thought, and they reported to me absurd things—things which in no two times of talking were the same or consistent. Some of them did things because they believed people liked them, and others did them because they believed people disliked them. None of them wanted clearly to do anything, and those who had the first inkling of what they wanted to do—why, those wrote poetry, and it sounded like trash to me. So I avoided them all after a while—books and people.

"In the days which followed I thought chaotic thoughts, and it is remarkable that I did not kill some one or myself. I might have ended them if it had not been for the teacher of the violin. He knew some things which fascinated me, but after a time I wearied of them, too, for they were merely technical. And then I began to ask myself why I was living. Who is this creature which is I? I demanded, and this question caused me great pain. I suffered, my darling, so that I could not sleep or eat. And I played— How I played! Always—morning, noon, and night. And one day the teacher came to me. 'You will go mad soon,' he said. 'I am mad,' I told him. 'There is a yearning in your violin such as the world has never heard,' he said. 'There is a yearning in my soul,' I told him.

"How I suffered in those days! More, I believe, than I have ever suffered since, for I soon began to have hope. This is a great world, I told myself, a great and wonderful world. It has created such a one as I. There must be, somewhere, another one, I cried, a mate—a woman—a human being on whom I could lavish my powers, my thoughts, my heart and my soul. It was that thought which kept me in Russia, which made me content with playing in great halls; for they paid me well for this playing, and I needed money to go abroad in the world and seek her who was meant for me."

For a year, then, he played in Russia, and he went everywhere—wherever he was invited. Then he went to Paris, and there he met many women. But, when he talked about it to La Chota, he could remember none of them clearly—or anything that happened there—until he found himself again with a Gipsy band, where life was invigorating for a while. He remembered, however, the fifteen years that followed, when he lived most of the time in Shanghai, using that polyglot city as headquarters for long trips into the interior. He must have found a deep sense of comfort in Chinese surroundings, for drugs and decadent vices alone could not have held him so long. He might have ended his days in some dive there if it had not been for a certain evening when he weaved the *danse macabre* into a tune he was playing in a dancing-place on the Hwang-p'u water-front.

He had not touched his fiddle for years, and it was by accident that he happened to play. The fiddler of the orchestra had failed to appear, and Penco, in a state of half-stupor, volunteered. There must have been a score of international scoundrels on the floor. There was also James Carruthers, of the British consulate. Carruthers had not been long enough in China to condone her studied degeneracies. The *danse macabre*, that orgy of medieval times—danced by sufferers from the black plague by moonlight in cemeteries—has a music that is horrible to hear. When its slow, bleak notes insinuated themselves into the dance, some of the depraved wretches in the stuffy, dimly lit hall became crazed. Penco played on mercilessly, and there were ten minutes of nightmare during which men tried to strangle women and women tore at the bodies of men. Carruthers and a few others tried desperately to do something, and finally the Englishman grasped Penco by the neck and pulled the fiddle away from him.

THERE is no adequate record, either by report of others or from Penco's memory, of the years that intervened until he met La Chota. He might have been insane during a good part of those years, for his memory of them is much like the memory of a sufferer from mild dementia after sanity has returned. I heard from a soldier in Cairo—an English tommy—a tale of an old fiddler, a cripple in one leg, who had averted a panic in a time of the plague by standing in the open street and playing.

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"They didn't listen to him, exactly," the tommy says. "I listened a bit longer than the rest of them. There was a company of us to keep 'em from bloody riot. He just came out from nowhere—and played. We all stopped a bit—maybe it was a minute or two—to listen. We couldn't help it. Neither could the natives—and some of 'em was crazy with affliction, too. But soon we went about our business. It had all become simple, though, for there was that music whisperin' all the time."

I asked him what it was like.

"I never heard anything like it in all my life. It was, if you'll pardon me for sayin' so, like a little boy god sayin', 'Don't be damned fools—you're goin' to hell anyway.'"

All that Penco could tell La Chota about it was that he had given up hope.

"For I was getting old, and, you must remember, I had been thousands of years old even when I was Gyphtoi-Penco. I hated the people who were in the world, for they were everywhere, and where they were, their influence was. They and their influence were not for me; I was born for a different universe. The only human thing about me was my weakness. I loved the oblivion of drugs, the recklessness which came from liquor, and I loved to hurt—and sometimes to heal—with the powers I had through my violin. I could have played at concerts at first, but I was contemptuous then. Besides, I had hope—of finding you, for I was still young. Later, I tried to play, for I wanted the money; but people hated my playing—they found only horror in it, and I believe there was only horror. So I drifted from one city to another, playing mechanical tunes—things of time-beating—to get money, and then going on farther."

He was playing in the orchestra of a revue in Paris when he first saw La Chota. An eighteen-year-old bayadere-girl, almost Grecian with her lithe figure and languid eyes, she was the sensation of the season. She had been doing a barefoot dance during the few weeks before Penco had come into the orchestra. Done to the slow, monotonous music of her country, the dance was a most exquisite expression of the passion of love—of joy and fear, hope and jealousy, fury and delight. Penco had rehearsed the music once in the afternoon, and the director had found him easy master of the notes. That evening he was sober. When the girl first came out he paid no attention to her. He began the slow drumming of the music much as it had gone before, but when her body began to move, he sat up with interest, and in a few moments he became as a man obsessed. Instead of the steady beat of Asiatic music his violin slid into a rapid, fluttering rendition, with a thin, high, minor background which had never been written into the notes. According to the Paris papers the next day, people in the audience shuddered, and some grew sick as the music went on. La Chota danced to this music as if in a trance—a writhing, distorted dance which, as one journal described it, "gave the impression that the dancer was hypnotized."

THE next night they did not appear, and neither Paris nor any other place heard of them for weeks after. A queer couple they must have been—the doddering, white-haired old man with his leering, wrinkled, swarthy face, and the intense blue eyes so incongruous in such a face, and the beautiful young girl, perfect of body and almost child-like in countenance but for the languid darkness of her eyes.

He held her with the magic of his playing. To this she had answered as if under a spell, intently and beautifully. But the great love which Penco drooled about found no answering fire in her, and little comprehension. All she knew was that here was a man who could play like a god or like a devil, and who talked more strangely and fascinatingly than she had ever conceived it possible for talk to be.

"Every move you make, my darling," he told her, "is fraught with the wisdom and the graces of centuries. You know nothing; your ignorance is abysmal, but you understand things which no human being understands but me. Your eyes, your mouth, your body—your limbs and the movements of your head—they are singing songs, telling truths, compelling obedience. Thousands of years ago the gods must have planned you, as they planned me, and they could only have planned us for each other. What cruel whim led them to spread these terrible few years between us? Why did they make this wonder possible, and then make it impossible?"

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"Can you see us," Penco would cry; "can you see us together, fifty years ago? If it had only been you, that time in Spain! And those days in this city so many years ago! I was splendid then, my darling—tall, clean of limb, and there was a music in my voice as well as in my body and in my fiddle. I was handsome—oh, do not look at me now!—handsome—the kind of beauty that would have set every vein in you singing madly with desire. I saw marvelous and fantastic things—charming things, my darling—everywhere. I saw loveliness in people, in cities, in trees and in dumb beasts. I was aching for some one to share my visions. Oh, how gloriously we should have wandered together!"

On moonlight nights they would go out into the garden, and she danced while Penco played. She did for him all the dances of her country, those which the bayaderes are taught, and to each of them he said she had given immortal beauty—and he knew them all. He taught her dances of other countries, the gay jigs of the Irish and the Scotch, the elegant grimaces of the body in which the French indulged, and the fiery, dashing swervings and circlings which savored of Spain. He taught her the dances of the Gipsies, too; and to everything he taught her he gave painstakingly and in detail his own interpretation and his own genius.

It did not last many weeks, for Penco soon came to recognize the incongruity of the situation; but he did not relinquish the grand manner, except at the end, when he saw everything clearly. It was after two weeks, when financial necessity compelled him to leave her evenings to play in obscure places, that he came wholly to his senses. He returned one midnight, looking deathly weary. She was waiting for him, dressed in the scant costume of her profession. There was tea, which she had prepared, and cakes, which he had taught her to make as the Gipsies make them. The living-room was softly lighted. Penco carefully put away his violin, sat down on the divan besides La Chota and came at once to the point.

"I have been a fool."

The girl, apparently ignoring his remark, poured tea for him.

"Do you hear me? I have been a fool."

"I hear you," La Chota answered gravely. "I know of no foolishness you have done."

His eyes flickered for a moment with gratefulness.

"What a love you would have made!" He sighed. "You have the dignity of a goddess. I am an old man—a sapped-out old man—an aged bag of weakness and vice, a repository of shameful memories, a cripple, an ugly, maudlin, tired creature, fit only for the grave. And I have been playing at love. Why, it has been comedy—grotesque, laughable comedy—and I have been gesturing with grandiloquent gestures, sober as a tragedian in the provinces, thinking it was drama."

"Comedy? I do not understand."

"Of course you would not understand. You are the one in millions—your soul is too fine to have a place for coarse absurdities. The only laughter you know is sweet laughter——"

"Get your violin," she said gently, "and let us go into the garden. Look! There is a moon. I am clothed for the dance. You are weary, and this will rest you. Come!"

Penco sat for many minutes in silence, his head drooping on his chest, his eyes closed as if in sleep. La Chota sat quietly regarding him. His eyelids flickered several times, and she knew that he was thinking, not sleeping, so she got out his violin and stood before him.

"Come!" she commanded softly.

IT WAS that night that he played the old French *carole* and taught La Chota how to dance it. He told her the story of the dance and its meaning.

"Do you like the spirit of it?" he asked.

"It has a great spirit," she answered.

"Do you like it?" Penco repeated.

"I am drawn to it more than to anything I have ever known," she replied.

Later that night, as he lay awake in his room, he was gripped for the first time by the realization that there would have to be a parting. A miserable creature like himself could not take the youth out of this girl—and it meant frightful humiliation suddenly to demand any more of her. He told her so in the morning.

It was in a mood of high heroics, of lofty martyrdom that Penco made his farewell. It was noon of a golden spring day, and there were all the absurd hopefulness, all the extravagant promisings and all the romantic predictions of buoyant youth in his mood.

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It was then that he told her, sonorously, to wait. His eyes glowed in his wrinkled old head—glowed with the pleasure of talking about the Fates, which had been ironical. But there was, to La Chota, pathos in his grandiloquence, and the lines of suffering which age had written indelibly on Penco's face made potent his injunction to call upon him whenever she needed him, to "send a message—a token, for I shall live, and you will know where to find me. I shall live for you, as I have lived these seventy years for you—and I will send you your answer."

The only magic which Penco knew, however, was the magic of his fiddle; and his promise to know always where La Chota would be—always to be at her call—was a promise which glowed in the making but faded in fulfilment. He did become steadier, more regular in his life, and the cause of this was the fact that when La Chota would need him, money might be required; and Penco had learned that money came only in response to simple, regular labor. He got a place in an orchestra in Paris, and he played adequately and dependably for months, so that soon he was looked upon as trustworthy. He left liquor alone—at first in the ecstasy of inspiration from his episode with La Chota, and later because his old body found the habit of sobriety pleasant and restful. In the ten years which followered he moved about little as compared with his former restless, vagrant life. He stayed in Paris for three years, and then he went to London. There, also, he lived an uneventful existence. His constitution, a powerful one, came into its own, and he was much stronger and sounder than he had been for years. He became almost smug, for he could never learn to be interested in the life round him.

His existence still rotated on his great emotion—his wonderful days with La Chota. At first he hugged this to himself in a sort of miserly gloating. Then his ego, desiring appreciation, caused him to venture cryptic remarks—usually to the drummer.

He preferred the drummer to the other players, for "this one tries to do nothing but to pound and keep time cleverly, and he does it well; as for those others, they play on instruments which were meant for the music of the heart and the senses and the soul, and they make havoc and desolation instead." He would come close to the drummer and speak in unintelligible snatches of "a great love—such as has not been seen since the world began, and such as will never be seen again." The drummer, a pleasant youth, would smile at the old man's vagaries and listen with gravity, for fear of offending.

COULD La Chota have seen him and heard him later, in the years he spent playing in the Blue Moon Cabaret in New York, she might have lost the sense of the glamour which Penco had given into her life. For he became what visitors to the Blue Moon called "a rich old character—been everywhere—and sure can hand you a flowery line about some Hindu dancing girl he says he once was nuts about." For Penco was beginning to love to lie in bed mornings, and to insist on good cooking for his meals, and he soon got so that he would talk for the benefit of any one who looked sympathetic. He never mentioned the name of La Chota, however, and although he talked at great length about the dances this Hindu maiden had danced for him by moonlight, he never mentioned that last night when she had danced the old French *carole*.

He might have died thus, and been buried in some obscure place, and have meant nothing in the world except a vivid urge in the life of La Chota if it had not been for one night, fifteen years after their encounter in Paris, when La Chota and a company of finely dressed ladies and gentlemen came a-slumming and wandered into the Blue Moon Cabaret.

It pained him deeply later, when they were seated alone in her luxuriously furnished apartment on Riverside Drive, to realize that he had failed to recognize her, while it had been she who had known him at once. Such pain would never have been his in earlier years, for it was a pain of petty vanity, of a warped egotism. He tried to translate t into terms of grandeur, however.

"These years I have been living—empty—but for you. And when you came—that I should not know you!"

"But I have changed, Penco. I have changed exceedingly."

She had changed—remarkably. Taller, slimmer, her body seemed to have developed as the bodies of the Anglo-Saxons and the

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Suddenly they all saw La Chota in the clearing, moving gracefully toward the old fiddler. He did not falter in his playing.

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Normans develop, rather than in the abundant measure which is the way of the East. And her face, although dark, was modeled rather than rounded—there were strokes of character in it everywhere. Only her eyes showed the mystic quality which had been her distinction fifteen years before in Paris.

The apartment in which they were seated was modern—savoring richly and quietly of the finest which New York had to offer.

"You have been doing well," Penco said. "I have been reading of you occasionally in the papers."

"Then you know?"

"Everything," said Penco. It would have been utter humiliation for him to confess that he had not found the means to know all about her—her every move.

"You know, then, how I have told them all that these dances are no art of mine—that a genius had taught them to me in Paris—and that I was simply doing as he had told me. I did not mention your name of course."

"Of course," said Penco.

"Why did you never let me hear from you?" she asked.

"There was no need. You encountered no great tribulation."

She looked at him strangely.

"Tribulation? But that was not all. Don't you remember what you said—about finding"—Penco stared at her, his pale eyes wide, uncomprehending—"a lover?" she rushed on. "I tried to find you—oh, how I tried! We postponed our marriage six months while I used every possible means to trace you. I concluded you had died."

He was stunned, and La Chota could not help but see it.

"Marriage!" he repeated numbly. "You are married. Then I have meant nothing."

"You know that is not true," she said quietly.

He said nothing, and soon his head dropped on his chest, his eyes as if in sleep, in the way she knew so well. She rose quietly and returned, carrying a violin. She touched his white head gently.

"Play for me."

He opened his eyes, and there was a bitter expression in them.

"You do not need my playing," he said.

"Oh, but I do!" she whispered. "I need it. I must know—something, and my heart cannot tell me; neither can the talk of others. *His* words even do not satisfy."

Penco stared at her without moving.

"It's my dancing," she went on. "He is very kind—more than kind, for he loves me as I love him. And he wants me to dance no more—to be a wife. I think—I really believe—that if it had not been for you, I should have known what to do. You have given me a great understanding of what it means to dance. But if it had not been for you I should never have been here—with him. I should have flashed for a while, as so many do, and I should have ended—perhaps in the arms of a tea merchant in Calcutta, perhaps more terribly. You taught me to wait, and what to wait for. Play for me!"

He took the violin slowly from La Chota's hands. Dusk was coming in through the windows. She was sitting straight in her chair.

He began with the slow, monotonous, drumlike movement which she knew so well. He played on softly for a while, and then the malicious notes rose with a rapid, fluttering movement—a thin, high, minor background coming into the theme. It was the dreadful thing he had played when he first saw her on the stage in Paris.

When he had finished, La Chota was sitting as she had been at the start. Her expression was one of horror. She made no move as he rose to go.

IT WAS that night at the cabaret that Penco inspired the drummer with fear and awe. It was that night that the drummer, watching him in fascination, saw him look "like a Spaniard, and like a Gipsy, and like a Jew." It is difficult to say from what emotions Penco was suffering. It is reasonable to believe that they were real and that his sufferings were intense, for he was playing as he had not played since he had become content with physical existence. Perhaps he was living his life over again, seeing his grotesque mistakes, his distorted conceptions, his futile acts—seeing them with an awful clearness.

That night was the beginning of an existence which Penco was too old and too weak to endure for long. The drummer, whom he had selected in earlier days in New York as a confidant, found him ghastly now. He was a pallid youth, this drummer,

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typical of New York's cabaret atmosphere—slicked pompadour, weak chin, large over-emotional eyes. If you should see that drummer to-day and give him several drinks, he would be likely to talk to you about Penco. He would tell you at first that Penco was "nothing but an old bum."

"Of course," he will admit, "of course, the old man could play. Jazz? I seen him make family men want to learn to shimmy! But he was nothing but an old bum. That is, for the last two months. Too much booze. And, say, listen—booze wasn't all. Know what else? Dope—'snow.' I seen him sniff it. I talked to him about it once." Here a touch of terror begins to show. "Never again, buddy, be-lieve me! He give me a look—ever see a Gipsy, a wild one, dancing by a camp-fire? That's how he looked—like a Gipsy by a camp-fire. And then he'd smile—God!" The terror is in full play now. The drummer's hands shake as he gestures to you. "Listen, friend; he was nothing but an old bum—Penco. Nothing but an old bum. Booze—and 'snow.' But he could play your heart out of your mouth, right out onto the floor. He could play and make your skin crack. He could play and send shivers through you so that you'd die if he didn't stop. I heard him do it—" Here the drummer is likely to become drunkenly maudlin, and you must either buy him another drink or see that he is taken home.

The drummer's impression of Penco is a true one surely. There were many patrons of the Blue Moon in those few months which followed who felt the weirdness of the fiddler's playing. None responded so intensely as the drummer, for none was as close to him as that youth, and apparantly none was as impressionable. And so it was that Penco was rapidly drinking and "doping" himself to death, with a strange accompaniment on his fiddle, with no one to observe but a frightened and fascinated drummer-boy.

He did not hear from La Chota again—and he never again spoke to the drummer or the patrons of the cabaret about his glorious love for the Hindu dancing girl. It was a very old and weary man who looked up to his employer one July evening a half-hour before the end of the afternoon's playing. Behind his employer was a liveried chauffeur.

"Here's your man," the proprietor said.

The chauffeur came up respectfully.

"Is your name Penco?" he asked. "I have been sent for you. I have been told to say that La Chota needs you. It is urgent. I have permission from your employer. If you will, come with me now."

"Where are you going to take me?" Penco asked.

"To my employer's hunting-lodge in Maine."

"Who is your employer?"

"He is the husband of La Chota."

ON THE train that night, Penco sat in the smoker for many hours before he fell asleep. It was not a particularly malicious or cruel Penco who looked out into the black of the night from those windows. It was a weary old man. Nor did he puzzle himself much as to why he was being taken so suddenly to La Chota. He asked the servant a few questions, but all the man could tell him was that he had received instructions by long-distance telephone to find Penco and bring him as quickly as possible.

A harassed-looking gentleman met them at St. Croix, the next day. Penco looked at him slowly and long. He noted the aquiline face, the fine dark eyes, the long, slender, powerful hands. He noted also the pallor of the man's face, the lines of worry about his eyes and mouth and the tense compression of his lips. La Chota's husband wasted no time on preliminaries.

"Since I sent for you, something unexpected and perilous has happened to my wife. She has been ill for weeks—a nervousness and unhappiness which I cannot understand, and she refuses to see physicians or nerve-specialists. In New York she would sit for days alone in her room. She looked tired and worn. Then she would go out for days—theatres, where she would leave in the middle of a performance—shops, and she would buy things she had no earthly use for. She danced for three nights in the opera ballet—and danced badly. The third night she had to be taken home, broken down from nervous exhaustion. I took her up here in the hope that the peace and quiet would help her. It is up here that she began to talk about you. She had not mentioned you in New York, but since she has been here she has been talking about you constantly in queer, jumbled

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expressions. She talks, also, about your violin—and maybe it was thought of you that made her bring along the Stradivarius she always had.

"So I sent for you, although I don't exactly know why. She has grown worse in the last few days—hasn't slept for four days now—except in snatches. I stayed in the room next to hers. Last night was the first night I slept soundly. When I woke—it was about four this morning—I looked in her room and she was gone. We've been searching the woods for her ever since. To be lost in these woods is a terrible thing. Many people are never found—die of starvation and exposure. I don't know of anything you can do now. If you will make yourself comfortable at the lodge, I'll wait here for the deputies and sheriff from St. Croix, who know about searching these woods."

FOR that day and night, then, the old fiddler stayed in the elaborately appointed hunting-lodge, served by the servants of La Chota's husband while the search was going on. The knowledge that La Chota had suffered during the past few months gratified a hunger in him, but the fact that her life was in danger was strangely unsatisfactory. Oh, if only *he* had been the one to have sent her into the wilderness, if it had been *his* design that she lose her life in this way! Then it would have been good—it would have given edge to the futile bitterness with which he was ending his days.

But to have it happen as an accident! How ironical the gods were, even to the last, to let him sit by and see them enjoying a deed which it would have been his cruel pleasure to have performed!

It was an hour before midnight, when he was just dozing off, that there was a commotion somewhere in the place, followed by the opening of his door. A little man, weather-beaten, with a woolen cap on his head and a torn mackinaw enveloping most of his body, came in.

"You're Penco, ain't ye? Well, how do ye feel about a three-mile hike through the woods?"

"Now?"

"Right away. The man here is gettin' a sweater for ye."

"What— Why——"

"They found her. Oh, yes; and ye're to bring yer fiddle along."

"I do not understand—" began Penco.

The man came in with boots and a sweater.

"Ye'll have to hurry," said the deputy. "It's a matter of life and death. I'll tell ye about it on the way."

Together, the wreck of an old man and the sturdy woodsman tramped through the black of the forests. The deputy had a compass to guide him, and at intervals of a mile there were others of the searching party, with lanterns, who signaled to him and received signals from his lantern, to make sure that he found the way. It was bitingly chill, and the going was tortuous. The deputy had to wait several times for Penco to rest.

"It's a bad business," the deputy told him. "They found her in a clearin'—a space about a quarter of a mile square. Woods on three sides and a precipice on the fourth. She's by the edge of the precipice—lookin' wild as a scared deer. Her husband sees her first, in the woods. He starts for her, and she runs away, screamin' like a loon. He comes after, but she runs like a deer. She must 'a' been wanderin' round all day—nearly twenty hours—but it's queer strength they 'ave when they gets outa their mind, like she is. I seen a gal like that once before. Really loony she was, though, and she was so skinny she could hardly lift a wash-tub when she was right, but——"

"The woman—the woman!" Penco interrupted impatiently.

"Don't git nervous, sir," the deputy advised him soothingly. "Better reserve all your strength. There's another two mile—and hard goin'. Plenty of time to hear it all. As I was sayin', they're strong as horses and fast as a frightened deer. Well, here she lands, in this clearin', and he chasin' after 'er. She runs right to the edge of the precipice, and he loses his nerve and stops chasin' her. Afraid she might go over—and it's a miracle she didn't. She stops by a boulder and keeps on screamin'. It was something awful! So there we all are at last, standin' about a hundred yards away, and any move we makes toward her, why, she goes back toward the precipice. It's a straight fall of three hundred feet into a ravine. We stands there about a

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half-hour when the boss gets the idee of sendin' for you. 'Tell 'im to be sure and bring his violin,' he says, and sends me to get ye. If that fiddle's too heavy, I'll carry it for ye. Think ye'd like to rest for a little?"

"I shall carry my violin," Penco said, his breath coming in gasps. "I am not exhausted. Let us not stop."

It seemed ages before they arrived at the clearing. What Penco must have gone through physically and mentally it is difficult to guess, but he went on with only one pause for rest, and when he arrived he was in such a condition that they had to lay him down and pour water on his face and whisky down his throat. It was a dark night, made mysterious by the clear, pin-point brightness of the stars. The sky was clear—a serene, deep, translucent black. At the further edge of the clearing a great boulder cast an inky shadow on the ground. At first Penco could see nothing.

"She's there, man!" La Chota's husband pleaded frantically. "Take my word for it. She's there, in the shadow. Can't you do something? Your violin—she has been raving about it for weeks. It has a power over her—you know it. Try—play something she knows. Here!"

Fumbling with stiff fingers at the case of the instrument, Penco brought out the violin. An unearthly light shone in his eyes.

A hoarse cry and the loud cracking of a balsam, followed by the flash of a shadowy white dress, revealed the presence of La Chota. The next instant all was blackness.

Penco drew his violin up under his chin and softly, rapidly tuned it. The instrument seemed to leap into a frenzy of sweet rhythm, of low, swift, stammering notes. The group of men stood behind him in the shadows of the woods. Penco advanced as he played until he stood in the middle of the clearing. His music had a wistful, lovely carelessness, a sweet, proud friendliness that was charming. Its notes at first were intimate, personal. They seemed to develop into a group-interest, a swaying, wholesome gaiety. They deepened then, and seemed to encompass all of life in their scope; a broad, surging happiness seemed to stream out into the night.

Nobody remembers just when it happened, but suddenly they all saw La Chota in the clearing, moving gracefully toward the old fiddler. He did not falter in his playing. In fact, he seemed to be lost to his surroundings. As he continued, there seemed to flow from his fiddle a rare spirit of good will—a rollicking, quaint music with a deep, vibrant background that hung behind it as radiance hangs about a countryside after sunset. Nobody seems to know just how La Chota moved across the intervening space—the nerves of all of them were badly on edge, and they might all have been unduly swayed by the music—but somehow she was suddenly close to Penco. He then began to move back, and, as he moved, his music drifted with a sweet sighing to the end. When he finished, he dropped his violin and La Chota was in his arms.

The next instant her husband was there. They all ignored the old fiddler while they bundled La Chota in blankets and raised her to the arms of her husband and those of the stalwart sheriff. Then the little man who had been Penco's guide turned to him.

"Ye're some fiddler," he said. "I never heard the like, even on the phonograph."

"I couldn't help it," Penco said, more to himself than to the deputy. "Never could I help what my violin does. I willed horror into it, and it gave me the *carole*."

For days after, La Chota was delirious, but Penco stayed in the lodge only long enough to get the next train to New York.

IT WAS three nights after Penco had left the Blue Moon Cabaret that he returned. He was suffering with a bad cold in his head and in his lungs, but he played that evening. The drummer seemed to see strange things in his face, for, although Penco played with a simple beat of time and with no more inspiration than the average fiddler in the average orchestra, the drummer whispered between dances to the pianist:

"Look at the old man! I'm a son of a gun if he ain't the living picture of Jesus Christ!"

"You're nuts," was the pianist's judicious comment. "Christ had whiskers."

It was the next morning that Penco began to drink, and it was that evening that he failed to appear at the Blue Moon Cabaret for the last time.

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Harmony Chapel

Life in the Great Smoky Mountains, Where Some of the Hill Folk Are Still Quite Primitive, Even in Religious Matters. A First Story by a New Author

By C. Hodge Mathes

THE noisy waters of Big Powderhorn, falling down from the Tennessee side of Thunderhead, cease somewhat their mad tumbling as the narrow gorge widens out into the roomy valley of Galax Cove. Twelve times the creek is crossed by the rocky wagon-road in the five miles of its inhabited course. Four of the crossings are effected by means of crude bridges of unhewn logs. The rest are turbulent fords, easy and safe enough at ordinary seasons, but difficult or impassable in times of spring freshets or late-winter thaws.

From the lonesome cabin of Huse McKinney, whose heavy pasture-bars close the upper end of the road, down to the little settlement that is the gateway to the wider world of Dry Valley, there are in all about forty homes in Galax. A typical cove of the Southern highlands it is, in that spacious region that runs truer to type than any other section of America—a little hill-locked inlet on the broad stream of Democracy, whose mighty tides send scarce a ripple into its safe seclusion.

You probably wouldn't find Galax Cove on your map of Tennessee. Indeed, old man Jake Howell, who used to be the schoolmaster in the "settle*ment*," declared once that even the name of the place had been "tore out o' the joggafy." Only a faint blue line on the government topographical map, growing imperceptibly heavier as it approaches the broader, bluer band of the Little River, suggests to the imagination the devious path of sparkling rills somersaulting into rivulets that finally unite to form the Big Powderhorn.

But to the folk who live in these forty sequestered homes under the long shadows of Great Smoky, Galax is the very center of the big world whose circumference lies somewhere beyond the blue haze of the environing hills.

Nor is it so circumscribed a world as the outlander is prone to believe. It stretches wide enough for suns to rise and set, for the eternal interplay of day and night, summer and winter, tempest and the calm of placid stars. Wide enough to compass the ultimate metes and bounds of human affairs—birth and death, youth and age, toil and rest, love and hate, hope and despair.

Life in the little-big world of the cove keeps somehow close to things elemental. The grim, bare-handed struggle for physical existence in the half-cleared wilderness occupies body, mind and heart during most of the short span between belated sunrise and mid-afternoon twilight. For the rest—the soul-cravings that food, raiment and shelter cannot satisfy—the mind of the cove-dweller is driven inward upon itself, and he becomes introspective, instinctively religious. In such an environment as his, the seeds of asceticism and fatalism in his Calvinistic traditions fall upon fertile soil. His religion becomes a major concern, but is yet a thing apart in the drab routine of his unending grapple with nature.

Time was when the two tiny "church-houses" in Galax Cove, the Hardshell and the Methodist, stood over against each other like two frowning forts bristling with menacing guns.

When "Preacher Ike" Gallaher hobbled down the valley to preach in the Hardshell

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meeting-house, or perhaps to "hold a babtizin' " in the dark pool at the edge of the churchyard, the old man came with no soft gospel of compromise or tolerance toward the "onscriptural teachin's of these here Methodis' people up the creek." And when Wesley Shelton, the gray-haired circuit-rider from Dry Valley, preached to his smaller flock in the "upper meetin'-house," he came as Elijah came to Carmel, to rout the enemies of Jehovah and lead the prophets of Baal down to the brook and slay them there.

But that was before "the big tide."

IT HAD been a forward spring in the hills. The sunny first days of April had brought "corn-plantin' time" earlier than usual. Far up on the southern slopes the white-canvas squares of tobacco-beds gleamed in the morning light. Nature, defying all the canons of the artist with shocking discords of red and yellow and pink streaked against the gray of sandstone cliff, the brown of plowed hillside or the shifting greens that paled away into the sky-line, achieved a harmony no artist ever dared to copy.

With corn in the ground, tobacco planted, and "sweet-'tater slips" bedded thus early, the farmers in the cove had more than their wonted leisure in the early summer. Preacher Ike, as an ever-watchful laborer in the Lord's vineyard, discerned the signs of the time as auspicious for a "protracted meetin'." Accordingly it was "norated around" that there would be "preachin' ever' night at early candle-lightin', beginnin' with the new of the moon in May."

Picture a little congregation of some sixty mountain folk seated on rough hand-made benches, men on one side, women on the other. On little wooden brackets along the walls, four small, smoky kerosene-lamps alleviate the darkness with a weird half-light.

The gaunt form of Preacher Ike "weaves" rhythmically back and forth as he warms up to the message of the hour. His nasal singsong, punctuated with grotesque "Ah's!" long drawn out, fills the narrow room and pours through the open windows, to be beaten back in echoes from the vertical mountain walls across the valley.

There was something strangely gripping about the rude eloquence of the illiterate parson of Galax Cove. The more sophisticated of the mountain youth had learned to laugh at his primitive delivery, but the more thoughtful sensed the indubitable power of the preacher—something perhaps akin to that which once drew scribe and Pharisee into the wilderness to hear one dressed not in soft raiment or shaken like a reed in the wind, but a prophet and much more than a prophet.

It chanced that the new moon of May fell on the third Sunday. Night after night for two weeks the meeting went on, and the congregations grew with the fervor of the preacher. A few of the Methodist adherents came, partly through the irresistible attraction of a revival upon the mountain mind, partly through a half-concealed truculence, to hear what the preacher "really did say agin the Methodis'."

They came seeking, and they went away having found. Bold with a courage worthy of the noblest cause, the old Hardshell prophet knew naught but to deliver the oracles of Jehovah as he heard them through the thick walls of his cribbed and cabined soul. His mind, untutored, was yet keenly and coldly logical. With his major premise based upon the unshaken word of revelation as interpreted by those of his own creed, and his minor premise supplied by the unbelieving Wesleyans, there could be but one conclusion. The Methodists might be sincere, they might be well-meaning folk, but they deliberately rejected the plain teachings of the Scriptures. Hence they followed a road that in the end must lead to hell.

"I tell ye right now," he shouted, "that God A'mighty didn't never have to save nobody at all—ah! He done it jest of His own free will—ah! An' He laid down in this here book jest how He aimed to do it—ah! Hit says, 'Repent an' be babtized—ah!' An' then hit goes on an' tells jest *how* to be babtized. Hit don't say nary word about sprinklin' nor pourin'—ah! Hit says John the Babtis' led the Son of Man right down *inter* the water, an' atter he babtized Him, he led Him up *outen* the water.

"I tell ye, people, that they's some around here that preaches what ain't in this here Bible—ah! An' I tell ye they's a-leadin' immortal souls into slippery places. An' as sure as this Good Book's true from kiver to kiver, they's goin' to come a time

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when ye got to answer the Jedge when he axes ye, 'Why ain't ye got on a weddin'-garment'—ah? An' then the Jedge is goin' to say: 'Ye hain't done what the Book said. Depart from me—I never knowed ye!' "

As might have been expected, the word went forth and finally came to the ears of Brother Wes Shelton that the walls of Methodism on Big Powderhorn were being sorely beleaguered. It was even rumored that some of Tobe McIntosh's family had "jined up" with the Baptists and that further defections were imminent.

When that call from the Lord's people in distress reached Brother Wes, all that was finest, most heroic in him responded to the clarion voice of duty. Mounting his old mare, Magalene—so named, he said, because as a filly she has been possessed of seven devils—he rode to the help of Israel.

IT WAS near sundown on Saturday before the fifth Sunday of May when he drew rein at the "uppin' block" in front of Nath Walker's "tub mill." Half a score of the men of the cove were gathered here, waiting each his turn while the tiny mill in its ancient way "first ground one grain and then started on another."

"Howdy, gentlemens?" was Brother Wes's greeting. "How's she grindin'?"

"Purty slow, Brother Shelton; purty slow. The dry spell's run the water powerful low," Nath, the miller, drawled. "Won't ye light and rest yer nag a while?"

"I reckon not," the preacher demurred. "I'll be gittin' along up the creek a ways."

"I 'low ye'll hold meetin' to-morrer in the upper church," ventured Nath. Nath was one of Brother Wes's stanch supporters. His tone was intentionally casual, but the query was designed as an "opener."

"The Lord willin', I aim to do it. I reckon some of you-uns 'll be out to the preachin'," replied Brother Wes, turning Magalene's head up the road.

"Reckon ye heared they was a big meetin' a-goin' on in the Babtis' church?" Nath threw out his final challenge to draw the preacher's fire.

"I heared a little about it," Brother Wes retorted, "an' I 'lowed I'd have somethin' to say about it to-morrer."

Old Magalene's iron shoes clinked defiantly upon the "river rocks" as she and her rider disappeared round the sharp turn.

"Fifth Sunday" dawned clear and warm. For weeks the succession of cloudless days and balmy nights had been unbroken. Saturday night the full moon had poured its mild charity upon jagged cliff and bristling spur, softening all their harshness into gentleness. But it was remembered afterward that old Grandad Peterson, smoking his bedtime pipe in his dooryard, had descried a "sarcle" round the moon.

The laconic implication of the Reverend Wesley Shelton's farewell remark to the group at the mill did not miss its mark. By the almost uncanny freemasonry of the mountaineers, the word was bruited up and down the length of the cove before nightfall that "Brother Wes was goin' to light into the Babtis' a-Sunday mornin'." Even Huse McKinney at the end of the road tightened the shoes on his dilapidated mule by lantern-light, preparatory to a ride down the valley on the morrow.

Despite the momentum of interest that two weeks of Preacher Ike's vociferations had developed, drawing goodly numbers even from the rival camp, the certainty of a dramatic counter-offensive from the fiery Methodist filled the upper church on the eventful fifth Sunday morning. Not a few even of the Baptist persuasion found the prospect of a theological sword-clash more appealing than the sonorous reiteration of their favorite doctrines. Even Grandad Peterson, the senior deacon in the Hardshell church, doubted if his rheumatic knee was equal to the long walk down to the "big meetin'," and stopped for the first time in his life to worship with the Methodist brethren.

Those who remembered Wesley Shelton as a young man told thrilling tales of his prowess in the arts that constitute the pentathlon of the mountain youth—running, lifting, wrestling, boxing ("knocking") and swimming. Even now his eye had not lost its luster, and his tall frame, though bent with the burdens of seven decades, gave still the suggestion of a power that might be summoned at need.

To-day, though, he seemed more aged and weary than fiery as he sat cross-legged on the bare platform behind the rude desk, although the early comers, as they sat in expectant silence, sensed something ominous in the outward calm of the old warrior.

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Long afterward, many of the little congregation used to speak of that "fif'-Sunday meetin'."

"I jest set thar a-thinkin'," Aunt Louviny Whitehead would relate over and over, "of the day he married me an' Ben. I mind it jest like hit was yisterday. I'd allus heared him preachin' in his big roarin' voice, but that day he was plumb gentle, and his voice was soft and easy-like."

"Yes," Tildy Walker, mother of Nath Walker's eleven children, would add; "I was allus kind o' skeered of him till he come an' et at our house. Then I seed how he tuck on over the little uns. He'd take the little setalongs on his knee and talk to 'em when they hadn't never seed no strangers afore, an' they wasn't afeared of him nary bit. An' then when he buried our little Virgie an' I could jest see his eyes a-puddlin', I knowed then Brother Wes was a shore-enough man of God."

STRANGE mixture indeed he was of gentleness and ferocity, of broad sympathy and bitter prejudice, of compassion for sinners and implacable hatred of heretics. To-day, though, the iron was deep in his soul. The Church of his fathers, the faith once committed to the saints, had been attacked. Some of the little flock whom he had sought to lead in green pastures had been enticed into strange by-paths, and were all but ready to turn their backs upon what was to him the very fold of truth itself.

"Brethren, my tex' to-day is from the old Book of Genesis: 'An' God said unto Noey, the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence. An' behold I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh.' "

"When I seed him a-thumbin' in the fore part of the Good Book," Huse McKinney reported to his wife, Cordie, on his return, "I knowed he was huntin' a tex' to skeer the ungodly with. An' he shore done it.

"He cert'nly showed 'em up, too," Huse continued. These here deep-water Babtists a-puttin' their trust in goin' under the water instid o' gittin' under the blood!

"Why, Cordie, hit was plumb fearsome the way he showed 'em the wrath of God a-comin' like the flood in the days of Noey!

"I kin hear him yit a-sayin': 'O my hearers, I tell ye the floods of waters is a-comin'. Some of you-uns has been tryin' to put yer trust in the waters o' Powderhorn, like as if *hit* could save yer guilty souls! O sinner, I tell ye the floods o' God's wrath is a-comin' down Powderhorn, an' they's a-comin' soon!' "

It was a sobered little throng that filed out of the weather-beaten church after the sermon. As the people stood round the churchyard in little groups, unhitching their horses or seating the children in the straw-filled wagon-beds for the homeward journey, there was much comment on the sermon.

Among the Methodists, naturally, there was much nodding of approving heads and an unconcealed elation over the evident discomfiture of the Baptists present. Grandad Peterson gripped his old walking-stick tightly as he limped up the dusty road, but his only comment was:

"Well, I 'low the Lord A'mighty knows more about who'll git drownded when the floods comes than some that holds theirselves up fer prophets."

And Grandad's stick rapped smartly on the stones as he turned toward his cottage nestling on a "bench" of the mountain, a hundred yards above the road.

When he had climbed the steep path up to his little yard, he turned a moment to take in the familiar view down the narrow valley. As his aged eyes rested upon the quieting harmony of landscape and sky-line, his weather-wise glance did not fail to note the scalloped crest of a summer cloud showing just above the dim outline of far-away Clingman's Dome. As he turned and lifted the latch of his cabin door, he thought he heard the distant rumble of thunder.

Preacher Ike, after a sermon filled with denunciations the more scathing because of the diminished congregation of "fifth Sunday," was walking up the road to take dinner at the home of his son Lincoln, whose steep orchard rose sharply from the back yard of his cabin on the creek. Just before he reached the foot-log that led from the road across to Link Gallaher's house, he heard a horse's hoofs on the rocks and, looking up, saw Brother Wes swaying from side to side on his faithful Magalene.

It was the first time for many months that the two men had been face to face. With the echoes of their respective philippics still in their ears, each was obviously

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nonplused for a word of recognition to exchange with his antagonist. The stinging sense of having suffered reproach for righteousness' sake could not be ignored.

And thus the two prophets of the Lord, meeting in the way, passed on. No word was spoken, but in the look that each gave the other was fanatical, implacable hate.

It was just at this moment that Grandad Peterson thought he heard the distant rumble of thunder.

IN A land where newspapers seldom come and where weather-bulletins and barometers are either unknown or held in less repute than the local weather-prophet and the almanac, people must take the weather day by day as it comes. The folk in Galax knew nothing of the storm-warnings that had gone forth into every city and hamlet where the newspaper goes. They knew nothing and cared nothing about the unusual cyclonic disturbances in the Caribbean which had been moving landward for days.

They knew only that across Thunderhead that Sunday evening there swept one of the spectacular summer storms that have given the peak its name. From their dooryards and rude porticoes they could hear the premonitory rumblings from the black cloud rolling in terrific grandeur over the giant rampart from Thunderhead to the Miry Ridge.

Then the storm swept down the great transverse ridges of the Tennessee highlands, filling the ravines and deep hollows with indescribable tumult. Tumult of shrieking winds, of snapping branches and uprooted trunks thrown crisscross on the mountainsides. Tumult of crashing, appalling thunder-din, caught up and hurled back from a hundred cliffs and crags. And through it all the swish of blinding sheets of rain, swelling crystal rills into mad torrents and frothy cascades.

The storm passed quickly, but all night the lightning signaled back and forth from Thunderhead to far-away Leconte. Toward morning the main body of the cloud masses driven by cyclonic winds began to drop their burdens of moisture as they rose to the upper levels of the mountain barrier.

All day it rained, not the gentle rain of a summer day but the downpour of a tropical storm. At nightfall of Monday, Tobe McIntosh "'lowed the clouds looked thinner," but Grandad Peterson shook his sage old head.

"I've been a-settin' an' a-readin' the almanac to-day, an' the signs is right fer a heap of fallin' weather. Somehow, I can't git it out o' my head what that thar preacher man said a-Sunday about the floods a-comin'."

Once more Grandad was vindicated of his prophecies. Monday night and Tuesday, Tuesday night and Wednesday, the rain never ceased. Wednesday night, many thought the rain grew heavier than ever. Thursday dawned dark and cold, but the rain fell unabated.

On Monday afternoon, Nath Walker, the miller, was able to handle the grists as they came, for the night's storm had raised the low waters to their normal stage. Tuesday, the little flume that supplied the primitive horizontal wheel was spilling the yellow water over the mill-timbers. At noon Wednesday, Nath abandoned the mill, as the flood threatened to cut off the approach from the road in front. Late that evening, the mill went out.

With the foot-logs all washed away and the fords impassable, Galax Cove was cut in two, with no possible means of communication across the dividing stream. Even the booming voice of big Davy Holder gave up the futile attempt to shout a warning across to Link Gallaher that the water was stealthily creeping round his house. Link, standing on his porch, tried hard to catch big Davy's excited voice and gesticulations, but the deafening roar drowned both sound and sense.

Preacher Ike sat in the doorway, holding on his knee his favorite grandchild, little Beulah, Link's five-year-old "baby." The little one was looking with big-eyed wonder at the yellow flood rolling past the front gate, and clinging in half-terror round her grandfather's neck.

"Grandaddy," she whimpered, "what did Dod let hit come so much big water fer? Did ole Wes Shelton ax Him to, like Grandad Peterson said he done?"

"Why, child, whatever put sech a idee in your leetle head? Wes Shelton hain't got no more to do with hit than me or yer paw," the old man replied. But his heart was less calm than his words.

"Never mind, honey; jest you trust in the

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Lord an' hit'll be all right," he added comfortingly. And the little maid's heart grew stouter at his words.

NOBODY in Galax slept that Wednesday night. Before bedtime a disturbing rumor went up and down the line of watchers on the north bank that Ferd Davenport's house had been undermined and was adrift; but the report could not be confirmed, as Ferd lived on "yan side."

All night the thunder of the relentless storm overhead was drowned entirely by the more terrible thunder of the waters. The narrow creek-bed was washed into a broad river-channel, down which the drift scudded—countless logs, occasional bridges, haycocks, hen-coops and small outbuildings. From the depths of the channel came the horrible grinding of rocks, titanic boulders rolling and sliding upon the primordial floor of the gorge. Small islands went by, with trees still standing erect, sometimes with frightened fowls aroost in their branches.

Big Davy's warning could not have saved the Gallaher house even if it could have been understood. When the first dim light of morning came, Link realized that the house and barn were hopelessly cut off. Tearing off the heavy battened door of the log kitchen, he tried, with the help of his wife and Preacher Ike, to construct a raft on which the mother and child might reach the higher ground in the rear, where the orchard tilted up the mountainside. The current in the forty-foot space between the back door and the orchard fence was not swift, and Link hoped he could get the little family to safety by pushing the raft across the narrow sluice.

Carefully he seated his wife, Cely, with little Beulah in her arms, while he and the grandfather, half wading and half swimming in the shoulder-deep water, pushed the unsteady craft toward the orchard gate.

Just what happened the next moment no one could ever tell. All that Link or his father can recall is that the four of them were suddenly struggling in the deep water and drifting down toward where the back-yard sluice rejoined the main current. Somehow, Link got hold of Cely and fought his way to the roots of a big chestnut at the edge of the orchard. From there they saw the frantic struggle of the aged father to reach the escaping raft, to the edge of which the child was clinging with the desperation of one drowning. But the strength of the grandfather's reckless lunges was puny when matched against the might of the torrent, and his yearning fingers missed the baby's floating garments by a hand-breadth.

It was all that Link and Cely could do to restrain the old man from his insane impulse to plunge down the current in the wake of the raft and its ill-fated little passenger. When they had finally dragged him to the roots of the chestnut where they had found footing, he threw himself forward with a mighty cry that was mostly a prayer:

"O God A'mighty, God A'mighty—my leetle Beulah gal! Ye can save her, God, and nobody else can't! Send a angel and save her, or else take me with her!"

"Git up, paw, an' help Link!" Cely was shouting, with the preternatural calm that mothers have when stout-hearted men go to pieces in whimpering supplications. "He's tryin' to git holt of that thar door with a pole. We've got to save my baby, and do hit quick!"

Cely was running now down the bank, watching the raft and the clinging child as the current tossed them about like specks of foam. It was broad daylight now, and through the swaying willows the excited watchers on the other side had just become alive to the tragedy that was being enacted across the creek. A dozen men and boys were running along the farther bank, keeping pace with the raft and with the frantic parents and grandfather on the nearer side.

Suddenly a tall figure dashed through the crowd of running men and plunged headlong into the flood. Nobody had time to see or ask who it was. They saw only that a head, half hidden under a broad-brimmed felt hat, was bobbing up and down on the crest of the boiling tide and was being propelled by long, powerful strokes farther and farther into midstream and keeping abreast of the tossing raft. There were strong swimmers among the mountain youth, but in a flood like this no sane man would even hope to cross the current.

But the head under the old felt hat kept atop of the seething swirls and was visibly gaining on the raft. Preacher Ike saw the unknown swimmer gradually closing the distance between himself and the frail bark that held the little life the old man loved better than his own.

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"Look out thar, Link!" he shouted hoarsely, as he stumbled on. "God A'mighty has sent a angel to save leetle Beulah! Glory! Glory! Glory!"

And the angel of the Lord did save little Beulah. With one final burst of almost superhuman strength, the tall swimmer clutched the edge of the old kitchen door, and with his other arm caught the body of the little girl just as her own tiny fingers were relaxing their clasp on the thick boards. The rescuer then guided the raft toward a projecting ledge of rock that marked a sharp bend in the creek. Upon this ledge Link Gallaher had leaped, in the hope of reaching the raft with his pole.

As the door struck the rock, little Beulah was thrown forward by the sharp impact right into the outstretched arms of her father, whose shout of joy could be heard even across the stream.

But the raft and the swimmer were whirled round the ledge and into the mad stream again. There was no strength left, though, in the long arms that had been so mighty to save. The helpless watchers on both banks saw the tense fingers slip inch by inch from their precarious hold on the slippery door.

But in that moment of final, hopeless struggle, the swimmer's face was turned upward for a moment, so that all could see.

"Hit's Brother Wes, and he's a-drowndin' right afore our eyes!" shouted big Davy.

THEY found Wesley Shelton's body three days later, lodged in a huge pile of drift two miles down the creek. In a rude coffin of hand-ripped walnut boards, the broken body was hauled back the long, hard drive over flood-washed roads to the little Methodist meeting-house behind which lay the old burying-ground. It would be weeks yet before the roads to Dry Valley could be traveled or a preacher of Brother Wes's own faith could come into Galax.

With one accord, therefore, the mountain folk, including the widowed sister of Brother Wes, Aunt Rachel McTavish, turned to Preacher Ike. They still say in Galax: "The biggest buryin' that was ever seed in this settle*ment* was Brother Wes Shelton's atter the big tide. An' nobody hain't never heared sich a preachin' as Preacher Ike give that day."

The Sunday-afternoon sun, slanting through the windows of the little church, fell upon the stolid faces of the assembled friends and upon the rude bier supported upon two splint-bottomed chairs in front of the pulpit. The silence was broken only by an occasional scraping of a heavy boot on the floor or by a subdued moan from Aunt Rachel. Behind the bier, on the low platform, Preacher Ike rose slowly and stepped forward on the creaking boards.

"Friends and neighbors," he began, "you-uns all know what has brung us out here to-day. I never 'lowed I'd ever be a-standin' in this meetin'-house a-tryin' to say somethin' about the man that used to preach to you here. Him an' me was travelin' fur apart on our road to the Better Land. I were on one side of the water an' he were on the other. You-uns has heared me say some mighty hard things about him an' his teachin's. God A'mighty knows I was tryin' the best I knowed how to preach what I larnt outen his Good Book.

"But las' Thursday mornin' the good Lord sent one of His angels down here to save my leetle Beulah out o' the turrible flood of waters. I seed that angel splunge right into the tide an' swim like no man on earth ever swum afore, till he throwed my baby squar' into her daddy's arms. An' when they told me that thar angel was my feller man an' brother, Wes Shelton, before God, people, hit plumb tore my ole heart outen my bosom.

"I ain't worthy nor fitten to be standin' here over this coffin, but I tell ye, if ever the good Lord opens them pearly gates fer me—an' I hope hit won't be long now—I'm a-goin' to ax fust fer one leetle peep at the blessed Savior, an' then jest a teeny word with my own Marthy that's been a-waitin' thar fer me twenty year. An' then I'm a-goin' to hunt up an' down them streets till I find Wes Shelton, an' I'll git him by the hand an' ax him to take an' interduce me to God A'mighty."

The little Hardshell chapel had been swept away along with Nath Walker's mill and half a score other buildings in the cove. It has never been rebuilt.

But the upper church has been remodeled. The mountain folk call it "Sweet Harmony Chapel," and they say it's the only meeting-house in the Smokies that has both a Methodist chancel before the altar and a baptismal font beside the pulpit steps.

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Jiggling Aerials

Those Eminent Vaudevillists, Freda and Billy, Now Retired to Restful Farm Life, Experiment With One of Our Most Popular Peace-Disturbers

By Walter De Leon

Illustrations by G. Tenggren

CAME the fourth winter down on the semicultivated section of Jersey jungle misnamed a farm, to which Freda, my ex-tight-wire-walking wife had dragged me when, after pulling me through a flu attack, she had put her seal on me good and plenty by marrying me.

At that time I owned nothing but fond memories of twenty odd and uneven years of playing piano in the show business, a few gray, departing hairs and a constitution discouraged by a long succession of one-meal days. Freda, one of vaudeville's busiest acrobats for twenty years, had a healthy bank-account—just how robust no human but her knew. She, eschewing argument and advice in her quaint Scandinavian way, had bought the property, the plow, the second-handed fliv for to haul seed and fertilizer and act as counter-irritant, and had kidded me, under the alias of Healthful Outdoor Exercise, into toiling in the soil of our sylvan wild-wood until both my artistic hands were one large blister, my back one long ache, my appetite ditto, and my life one loud protest. During that first year I also learned that, while Freda was generous, loving and a devoted cook of majestic ability, she was intensely Swedish and sure.

I was secretly planning a way to leave the certain labors of the farm for the uncertain bookings of vaudeville when friend wife forced the entire proceeds of our first crop into my stiffened hands, and at the same time, though unconsciously, the knowledge that the only way I could break her heart and happiness was to do what I'd been planning to do.

Stifling my surging artistic desires was made easier by Freda adopting a girl baby for me to take care of and which she named Christina. The babe, me and the farm, I knew, represented the acme of Freda's ambition nursed through her years of walking the straight and narrow path of a tight-wire performer. To round out her content, along with the decrepit fliv, and just about as useful and ornamental, she'd acquired a relic of the past named Cecil Herringworth, a sturdy octogenarian who drew down his board, lodging and fifty cents a day under the false pretenses of being the help round the farm.

Begun with the first-fruits of my field labors, most bank-accounts which had grew as steady as mine would have incited their owners with gratification and pride. Mine gave me the first only. All the pride was Freda's. Two or three times, the money I had coined through my curses and calluses I had invested in attempts to show my placid helpmate that because I was a musician was no sign I was a mutt in financial matters. And every time I'd tried to prove I wasn't, I'd proved I was. Likewise, every time after I'd kissed my savings good-by friend Freda had horned in, put her athletic finger in the prune pie and pulled me out with a plum in my hand. The consequence was that something like three thousand dollars of mine was lying in the bank, itching

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for action and nothing but Christmas to look forward to.

Even the piano I'd figured on buying was give me for my birthday the end of October by little Christina. From Freda I got a stack of old scores of operas I'd played on tour, a raft of classical and popular songs, a slough of Swedish folk-songs and a book of kid songs.

Well, starting in with the kid songs for little Christina, I discovered that the old fingers had lost their technic but not their touch. The fingers grown dextrous in picking succulent tomatoes and meaty eggplants still could pick harmonies from a keyboard. During the days and evenings which followed, making Cecil do all the hard work round the place, gradually I got back into the form I'd had before I'd deserted Bach and Berlin for the hoe and the harrow.

THERE was a fine young storm brewing outside one night when, after putting little Christina to bed, I went into the living-room, where Freda was knitting. In the piquant accents of her nativity she asked, "You play 'Lars' once, eh, Billy?"

It was a rollicking little ditty, all about a fellow name Lars and a gal, Norma, who run away from stern parents and set up housekeeping in an igloo. One day, while spearing fish, they slipped off an ice-cake in a fiord, and found even the heat of their embrace not sufficient to warm the water enough to prevent them from freezing together and stiff.

"That's what's the matter with me and you, Billy," Freda said, when I finished.

"The thermometer says sixty-nine," I answered.

"I don't mean the heat," Freda replied tranquilly. "Sixty-nine is scientific and plenty. Especially with woolens. What I mean we should not be so much by ourselves here. We ought to see more of our neighbors."

"The Redbushes and the Spiveys are bad enough. Why inflict any others on ourselves?" I ask. The Redbushes were our nearest neighbors tilling the same ground, raising the same crops in the same way their grandfathers had.

"The Redbushes, now, Billy; they know once we was performers. They can't understand why now we are farmers."

"They can't understand how we're outguessing them on the market," I say, "planting things in the spring which will bring the best prices in the summer."

"I know. I talk to Mrs. Redbush. She tells me we're lucky. I tell her we're scientific. I tell her we come over sometime and explain how we figure out crops."

"Oh, you did, did you?" I say. "I——"

"Sometime soon, I tell her."

I just nod, not wishing to start an argument by asking why should I leave my own cozy home to spend the evening with a family who are still telling the same jokes George Washington told their ancestors just before the Battle of Trenton.

"She tell me she show us the radio set."

"The Redbushes—with a radio?" I ask, surprised, knowing the old man's tightness. "Who kidded him into spending all that jack?"

"They're boarding a young fellow. He's inventing something new about a radio. He says when he's finished inventing they can keep the machine he's got there."

"Sounds fishy to me," I say. "They couldn't give him enough food in a year to pay for a first-class outfit."

"Oh, he makes all the parts himself."

"Ford is the only guy can do that. How long has this inventor been bumming his food?"

"Since summer. But he's finished now. Billy, you and me, we ought to have a radio set."

I might have known that was coming. Freda never talks aimless. Also, I saw an argument looming. I don't like nothing that's got loose shocks of electricity concealed about it. I'd been reading a lot about receiving sets and most of it concerned trouble and worry and questions: "What can I do about it?" Until the sets was perfected and efficient, I couldn't see spending my good money for one. Most of which objections I frankly told to Freda.

"And besides," I say, "nobody in this house knows how to run one."

"Mrs. Redbush says it's simple. And the music and the lectures——"

"Is also simple," I cut in. "They must be, being designed for rural consumption. I'll bet you— We'll go over to Redbushes some night."

"To-night?"

"Any night, and——"

Freda folded up her knitting.

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"I get my hat and coat, Billy. You don't need to hurry, though. I tell Mrs. Redbush this afternoon we wouldn't be there before eight o'clock."

NATURALLY, by the time we get to the Redbushes', I'm all set to knock everything about radio in an attempt to shift Freda's inclination to something else.

Standing alongside a receiving set with an amplifier on a table in the front room was a tall, skinny young man with a large mouth and small eyes. He had the kind and color of hair which always looks wet. His overalls were patched and once clean. Mrs. Redbush introduced him as Horace Hoquiam.

He began explaining at once about his invention.

"Do you know anything about electricity?" he asked.

"I know enough to let it alone," I told him.

Not pausing to smile, Edison's understudy began talking about aerials. That was his bug—aerials. He had a hollow square frame about five inches wide and three feet square, with wires stretched round it. This frame was fastened to balance itself on top of the box, in which was coils and do-dads I couldn't name.

"My aerials; see?" says Hoquiam, pointing to the hollow square frame. He gave it a twirl. "It's swiveled; see?"

"So as to face whichever way the waves are rolling, I suppose," I supposed.

"Oh, no, no! Nothing like that. You see, the electric vibrations come from all directions. Now, it's not only the swivel feature but the way I hook up these indoor aerials which is a new departure. It's an idea not covered by any patent controlled by the radio trust."

"All right," I say; "but what supernatural advantage has it over the poor makeshifts the trust is using?"

"I'll show you," says Horace. "I'll get Springfield." He turns a knob. Out from the horn comes the strangles of a choke-bore tenor singing a lullaby which would set any baby dreaming of Indians on the war-path. "Do you know how far away he is?" asks Hoquiam.

"Not nearly far enough," I say.

"Wait!" Horace begins jiggling the aerial-frame, shoving it back and forth. Another inch to the right and the choke-bore's strangles grow more poignant. "Louder; see?" exults Horace. "No fussing with coils nor knobs nor nothing; just jiggle the aerial. Now wait." He turns the wave-length knob. "Wait till you hear this."

A beautiful sputtering and piercing crackling ripped out of the horn.

"That's much better," I tell him.

A blond voice suddenly announces:

"Well, friends, we will offer as the next number of the Ladies' Aid Society's Glee Club that familiar old song: 'The Clock in the Steeple Struck One.' "

Abruptly a shriek rent the dry heat of the room.

"Ain't it wonderful?" enthused Mrs. Redbush, who had been tried and found wanting at the church-choir practises.

"The point is," butts in Horace, "is that between here and there GLUP is broadcasting. And GLUP is a modern, much more powerfuller transmitting station than WGI. Listen."

In another second, loud and clarion came the words:

"In looking over briefly the pyschological reactions subsequent to and consequent upon the Renaissance, we discover——"

I'll never know what that egg discovered, because, shutting off his gab, Horace tuned in WGI and the carols of the Ladies' Aid Society's Glee Club.

"I've just did one of the most difficult feats in radio receiving," young Marconi boasts. "I tuned out a stronger station nearer and tuned in a weaker one further without getting no interference or buzzing or static—and it's a damp night. Why? It's my aerials—the way it's hooked up and can be jiggled."

"You can't jiggle it to cut out some of the blue notes that are searing their way through the ozone, can you?" I asked, listening to the dying cadences of the lullaby again.

"No; but I can soften them." Horace makes good by turning the frame a little. "You see, a child can manage it."

"Sure!" says Freda.

"Not my child," I announce.

"Why not?" Freda wants to know. "Them wires is all—now—insulated, ain't they?"

"Insulated, but not insured," I answer. "Neither is the crystal detectives and the ten-dollar coils and the fifty-dollar

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thingumajigs which go to make up the expensive sets farmers are buying to put themselves to sleep with."

Old man Redbush opens one eye.

"I'm not asleep. And, besides, it's a great beneficial—er, you know, for young children—the education and lectures—like a Chautauqua right in your own parlor, and—and, besides, when I get time, I can hear market-prices in New York and Philadelphia on eggs and produce and—and that's why I'm buying this here outfit."

"He means," Horace says to me, "that's why he's staking me to board and room on my proposition to leave the set here when I go. He's refused to lend me a jitney to buy materials."

"So do I," I say, sensing a touch.

"I wouldn't let *nobody* advance me any jack *now*," Horace swears. "Now that I've got my aerial assembly perfected, I'd be a sap to let any one in on the profits."

"What profits?"

"The profits my invention is bound to make. In the first place, it's the simplest and most efficient indoor aerial assembly yet devised. Secondly, it'll cut anyway thirty-five or forty bucks off the price of a complete receiving outfit. And even selling at a price which will make the Northinghut assembly look sick, there's a profit of at least sixty per cent. on it. Do I look like a boob who'd let somebody stake me to a couple of thousand berries now in return for fifteen or ten per cent. of the millions that'll roll my way when this here invention is on the market?"

"I thought the Northinghut people and several others which make up the trust controlled all the basic patents and so on and so forth," I remark.

"They do—of everything that's being used. But I've got something they never thought of. Never having thought of it, they ain't got no patent on it, have they?"

"That's something for their lawyers to answer," I say.

Horace just laughed.

"I got the answer up-stairs in a locked box—the patent-papers I received this morning from the Government Patent Office. That's all the answer I need."

NEXT morning, reading the paper, I couldn't keep Horace and his invention out of my head. There was a piece in the paper about a great inventor who hadn't been able to invent any elixir of life and so had left this mortal coil and ten million dollars for his heirs to get nasty over. The article gave a list of other famous inventions which had made their originators and stockholders wealthy.

Glancing up, I saw Horace himself coming toward the house. He looked blue.

"What's the trouble?" I asked him.

"Bad news from my uncle out in Montana. You see, he was going to pay the patent-attorney's fees and the incorporation expenses and such like. Now the poor old boy has had his place of business burned and he can't send me the dough."

"That's tough luck," I said, "having to wait till he gets on his feet again."

"It'll be six months—that's what it'll be," gloomed Horace. "I can't wait that long. Either I'll have to sell out to the radio people or, just as worse, give up part of my interest to a backer. I only need such a little, too."

"How much?" I ask, remembering the three thousand seed I had in the bank.

"Thirty-four or -five hundred," Horace told me.

"How much interest in your rights are you willing to turn over for that amount?"

"Two per cent.," Horace said magnanimously.

"I hope you get it. Why don't you go down into Green County, Pa. They tell me a fellow can sell anything down there."

Horace didn't like that.

"You're just like all the other guys with money, browbeating the guys with brains, insulting the inventors who made their fortunes for them."

I quote something I'd read once.

"Ain't any invention ever invented worth a nickel if it ain't commercialized? Now, listen; suppose a guy should show you a certified check for twenty-five hundred dollars and ask you for twenty per cent. of your interest. What would you do?"

"I'd give him five per cent."

"Did you ever see a certified check for two thousand five hundred dollars?"

"No."

"You probably never will," I told him.

Horace thought that over.

"Ten per cent.," he offered. "I need more than twenty-five hundred, but I'm not going to let anybody hold me up——"

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"I've just did one of the most difficult feats in radio receiving," young Marconi boasts.

"Who's trying to hold you up," I interrupt. "I'm only advising you. I work too hard for my money to throw it away on something which maybe is covered by patent-papers and maybe is only *said* to be. You wasn't dreaming *I* was going to give you three thousand dollars—for ten per cent.?"

Gradually he begun to see the light. Before the bank closed that afternoon, Horace had my certified check for twenty-eight hundred, the patent-papers were in the safety-deposit box I and Freda rented, along with a paper signed before a notary which read that fifteen per cent. of the invention was the property of William B. Renton, his heirs and assigns, to have and to hold even after the patent-papers theirselves was returned to Horace H. Hoquiam upon his repayment of twenty-eight hundred to the hereinbefore-mentioned party of the first part, William B. Renton.

"Now," said the party of the second part, "I'm going to go straight to Newark. There's where a couple of guys who want to finance the company to manufacture my aerials is at. I've already give you their addresses. If you want me for anything, 'phone the Argosy Hotel. That's where I'll be at. I'll 'phone you to-morrow what's new."

To-morrow he didn't 'phone. And the next day. Likewise the third and fourth. The fifth day found me in Newark.

The Argosy Hotel had a lot of names on its register, but nothing like Hoquiam. I started out to the addresses Horace had give me. The first was a frame building with a sign hanging out—Sing Low, Laundry. The second wasn't. It was the empty space between a furniture warehouse and a gas-tank. It didn't take no radio outfit to receive the news that I'd been aerially jiggled out of twenty-eight hundred dollars.

Wandering the streets, I was recalled to consciousness by a loud voice saying,

"Billy Renton!"

It was an old pal of mine, Charlie Weingate, the barytone.

"Hello, Charlie!" I say, limp.

"What's the matter, Billy? You look like you'd lost your last friend."

"I did—twenty-eight hundred of them. But I haven't been a farmer long enough to take it naturally." And I sad-newsed it all to Charlie.

"That's a funny coincidence," Charlie said, after expressing more or less sympathy. "I'm just now on my way to the broadcasting station to sing. My pianist is laid up, and I been cursing because I'd have to pick up some strange accompanist."

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I had the germ of an idea.

"What do they pay pianists at the broadcasting station?"

"Nothing," Charlie wet-blankets. "We do it for the advertising and publicity it gives us. Listen, Billy; do me a favor. Play for me to-night, won't you?"

"Well, it won't cost me anything at least, I guess," I tell him.

BUT waiting round in a room at the broadcasting station—Charlie had been called out for something—I got thinking things over. Why should performers give gratis to the radio people the entertainment which make folks buy the radio-trust's machines? Even suppose it was wonderful publicity for the performers—no getting-away from that—still, the phonograph people paid their artists. Of course, radio programs—everything radio was new——

"No strangers permitted," I heard somebody say. "You'll have to leave immediately, I fear."

I saw a sweet-scented young man with eye-glasses was talking to me. Ever meet anybody you immediately took an intense dislike to for no reason at all? That's the way that cluck hit me.

"No strangers are allowed to loiter here," he repeated.

"Don't worry. I'm not loitering," I say.

"Well, you can't remain here."

"Oh, yes, I can. Furthermore, I'm doing you a favor by remaining here."

"If it's the chief electrician you wish to see, give your name and address to the girl outside, my good fellow——"

He put a lily hand on my elbow and tried to ease me out. Naturally I shook him off, not roughly, but energetically enough to jar his eye-glasses off his nose. Just as I did so, a big gray-haired man stepped into the room.

"Here, here! What's this?" he asked in the voice they get from years of bossing employees.

"The worm, here, turned on me," I say, pointing to Willie, picking up his glasses. "I came to play piano for Charlie Weingate. But I've changed my mind." I start for the door.

"Wait, please!" the big fellow said. "I'm sure Curtis did not understand, Mr.—er—what is your name?"

"Renton. William B. Renton."

The big fellow gave me a funny look.

"Did you say William B. Renton?"

"Of Old Tower, N. J. Maybe you remember me as a musical director in vaudeville and musical comedy which I was for over twenty years."

"Oh, of course," he said, not remembering at all. "Won't you come into my office a moment? They are making a minor repair in the broadcasting apparatus which will delay the program for a few minutes."

Inside, he introduced himself as "Crawford" and offered me a fat cigar.

"You say you came here to accompany Mr. Weingate?"

"Yes. I happened to meet him on the street, and—" I stopped, short and quick. Why should I tell this radio-trust officer about the patent-papers lying in my safety-deposit box? Maybe that's what they were doing—lying bogus. But if they should be any good, I might be able to salvage some of my twenty-eight hundred with them.

"And?" prompted Crawford.

"And thinking to favor him and your thousands of listeners-in, I came up here."

"Is that all?" Crawford asked. Before I could ask him what he was driving at, the telephone-bell rang.

"Yes; he's here. . . . What? . . . Um—well, I'll ask him."

Crawford hung up and faced me.

"Madame Durka's pianist has also disappointed."

"If you'd offer a decent weekly salary for a steady job, you would not have all this trouble, and you wouldn't have to ask perfect strangers the favor I see you're going to ask me," I told him.

"We've been thinking of something of the sort. However, will you help us out to-night?"

"For how much?" I ask. "I don't need the advertising."

"What would you consider a fair amount?"

"Where can you get a decent pianist for under seventy-five or eighty a week?" I ask.

"That's a lot of money," Crawford said.

"Yep. I'd have to save every nickel of it for over four weeks to buy one of your cheapest receiving sets," I told him.

Crawford looked keenly at me.

"One night—one-seventh of seventy-five dollars is——"

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"Is out," I finish for him, "unless accompanied by a long-term contract. Otherwise, my price is higher for one performance."

"It's a new departure for us," Crawford stalled, after thinking for a minute. "I'm not sure it would receive the sanction of the Board of Directors."

"Well, while they're deciding, you'll have plenty of time to pick out a good pianist," I reached for my hat.

"However"— Crawford detained me— "under all the circumstances——"

HALF an hour later I was sitting in front of the piano in the broadcasting room, one hand on a nice new contract, listening to an announcement being made:

"The well-known operatic barytone, Mr. Charles Weingate, singing some old favorites. Accompanied by Mr. William B. Renton."

Not till then did it hit me—I was back again in show business!

But not till I was in the train on my way home did I begin to wonder how I was going to stick out the contract till I'd made enough out of it to replace my stolen shekels. And Freda—what was I going to tell her?

Not a glimmer did I have for explaining or alibiing when I opened the door of the living-room that night where Freda was weaving her knitting-needles.

"So Charlie is singing for the radio," repeated Freda, after I'd explained merely that I'd went with him to the station. "I tell you something, Billy: We got to get an outfit. I was reading in the paper to-day where the doctors is a-going to radiate health-hints every night."

"So's everybody can sleep on the symptoms and wake up sick in the morning, I suppose," I crack. "If for no other reason, that's enough to keep a set out of a house where there's a susceptible child."

"You can always tune out what you don't like to hear," calmly replied Freda.

"How can you tell you don't want to hear it till after you have?" I asked, picturing the surprised and pained expression which would seep into friend wife's blue eyes if she should hear, "Accompanied by Mr. William B. Renton."

"One thing we should get it for, I know you like to hear," continued my blond gymnast: "One of these here government professors is going to give talks about farms and crops."

She reached me a paper, pointing to a paragraph that stated Professor Frost, of Princeton, would give over the radio some of the lectures he gave to the special night-class course for practical farmers he was conducting in Trenton, a course covering the four winter months.

Four months—night-school! If I could get away with it——

"Listen, Freda," I say; "ever since we been down here struggling with primeval nature, you've been after me to study up farming. I've been hesitating to broach the subject to you on account of leaving you alone evenings. But I'd really like for to enroll my name among the list of practical farmers who are taking this here professor's winter-night-school study of farming."

"If you get a radio set, you could stay home and not go to Trenton," Freda told me.

"And I'd only get about a third of the course," I answered. Freda kept on knitting, not raising her head, her eyes fixed on her needle-points. "Well?"

"Sure!" Freda said, wholly unenthusiastic.

I couldn't help feeling she was sore. Folding up her knitting, she walked over to the door.

"You do what you want, Billy. I think I go to bed."

Next morning I ran the old fliv up to the door of the Old Tower bank and hurried down to the safety-deposit boxes. Lying on top of the things in my box was the agreement I and Hoquiam had drew up and the long envelope in which the patent-papers belonged.

I turned back the flap to take a good look at them. The envelope was empty. Not even blank papers in it!

Leaning up against the wall, I remembered seeing Hoquiam, after showing me the seals, put the papers back into the envelope. I remembered him holding it while I fooled with the spring-catch on the box cover, which had stuck. I remembered tossing our agreement into the box when I'd got it open, and turning to Hoquiam for the patent-envelope—just as he reached over and put it in the box himself. And I remembered snapping down the cover without a suspicion that he might have taken the patent-papers out of the envelope while my back was turned. Not only a jiggler but a juggler was long Horace Hoquiam.

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Hanging round the house that day, I had the urge a couple of times to spill the whole story to friend wife. But I hated to show myself up for the goof Hoquiam had played me for.

There was a lot of things that happened the next week that I couldn't make head nor tail of. Instead of playing for all the soloists, or even most of them, I only worked a couple of numbers each night. "That'll be all," I'd be told. Then, on the third day, without any explanation, Willie Curtis gave me a note from Crawford asking would I play a piano solo—anything I pleased—every other night. It wasn't in the contract, but I did it.

Home, a couple of times, I found Freda's overshoes on the back porch all wet, as though she'd been wandering round the farm and had gone in and gone to bed just before I arrived. When I asked her about it, she told me that Olga, our evil-minded goat, had busted out and she'd had to chase her back into the garage again. Then she begun asking me questions about what I'd learned that night from Professor Frost. And I started quoting as much as I could remember of the book of his that I'd bought and was reading on the train every day in a studious attempt to get away with my double life.

Also, before the week was over, I was feeling very rocky. The weather had been terrible—cold and blustery. The four-mile morning drive to the station in the open car and the same distance back at night had become a severe pain in the fingers and toes to me. I'd caught a peach of a cold from hopping in and out of overheated railroad-coaches and trolleys. Nothing in the Newark lunch-counter where I ate my supper every night tasted right. Having to leave the farm so early, I missed the wonderful meal Freda always staged every night. I missed them. I missed the stuffed hour after supper before I put little Christina to bed. I missed trying reverently to extract the Swedish words her mother taught her from the American prayer she always said at bedtime.

Most of all, I missed kidding and talking with Freda all day long. Holding out on her the way I was, she couldn't help feeling something was very *los*. Maybe it was something else, but, anyway, there was a serious shortage of mirth round the place.

Also, the work at the broadcasting station was my idea of nothing satisfying. Always before, when I'd played, I'd been rewarded with applause or hisses, according to the culture of the audience. Even the time I played organ in church, where nobody is allowed to applaud, I'd seen them listening attentive and felt I'd reached them. But, broadcasting solos, I couldn't gather any uplifting and sustaining thrill of self-satisfaction by pouring my soul into a black hole. There wasn't even a record to listen to later, like when I'd played for the phonograph. It was simply dumping music out into the wide night atmosphere for to scatter itself and vanish eternally. Lots of times I got to wondering if anybody in the world was tuned in to the wave-lengths I was sending out aimlessly—and what the heck did it matter if they were or weren't. Then I'd remember the twenty-eight hundred I'd forced on Hoquiam, and keep on pounding.

The climax came on pay-day. When the treasurer gave me my envelope, it felt thick. Opening it, I found three weeks' salary instead of one.

"What's the idea?" I asked.

"Mr. Crawford's instructions. He said to put two extra weeks in your envelope and accept your notice of canceling the contract"

"You've got it," I managed to say.

FEELING like a lost lop-eared pup, I opened the kitchen door to see Freda basting a fat chicken in the oven.

"You got your notice from the radio people?" she asked, closing the oven door.

It took me a second to realize it.

"You—you knew?"

"I tell you something, Billy: When I hear through Mrs. Redbush's radio, 'Accompanied by Mr. William B. Renton,' why wouldn't I know it? That's why I lose patience with you, Billy. I know you don't know too much about money and you know I know it, and still you don't come to me when you get in a jam—which makes me work likell when I do find out."

"You knew about Hoquiam, too?"

"Sure! I find the patent-papers and agreement in the box when I go to cut some coupons. I know I got to take the patent-papers to a lawyer to see might they be any good. The question was: what lawyer. I go to the lawyer for the big Copper Coil

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Dumbly I absorbed what Freda told me bit by bit

Wire Company. If the patent is any good, I figure he'll offer me something for it."

Freda raised the top of a big stew-kettle on the stove and tested some fluffy dumplings with a fork.

"When he says he'll like to talk business with you, then I know what to do. So I go to Mr. Crawford, who is the main cheese in the Northinghut Company and radio trust. It's a good thing I see him before you go there with Charlie Weingate. He had told me he was sure their patents covered Hoquiam's idea. But when, next day, I find he'd give you a contract——"

"Who told you that?"

"The announcer. I'm at Mrs. Redbush's when he says among other artists contracted to supply entertainment is Mr. Renton. Anyway, when you get a contract, I know his lawyers must told him their patents didn't cover so much ground as he thought, and he was being nice to you and salving you to make you feel friendly when it came time to talk business. To make positive, I telephoned asking would he have you play solos, as I liked very much to hear my husband play. He says he gladly will." The first smile I'd seen in days broke over Freda's face. "Billy, you got no idea how good your music sounds. Honest, I'm surprised."

Opening the oven door, she turned the potatoes browning in the pan with the roasting chicken.

"Well, anyway, yesterday they sent for me like I knew they would when I told them I tend to all the business for the family. When I got there, there's a Board of Directors with Mr. Crawford—nice old kind-faced men which smile and make me feel right at home, Billy. Mr. Crawford, he starts saying that Hoquiam is a crook with a record, and it's by accident he's stumbled on something which he don't know the value of. He says, though, the invention ain't any good in its present form and hardly worth while their bothering with.

" 'Sure,' I tell him, 'I know. And Billy, my husband, he thinks it's a total loss. Anyway, he only owns practically fifteen per cent. of it, so it don't mean much to us,' They all nod and rub their hands like the nice old men they are. 'So,' I say, 'we'll be satisfied with a little money and maybe some stock.' "

" 'How much stock in the future aerial manufacturing concern do you wish?' Mr. Crawford says, showing his nice teeth.

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" 'Not aerial stock,' I say. 'You got me misunderstood. We take Northinghut Corporation stock, please.' Billy, you would laugh to see how quick all them nice men sat up in their chairs. They all yell the same thing: 'What's that?'

" 'I tell you something, gentlemen,' I say: 'Me and Billy, we know sixty thousand dollars ain't hardly nothing for the rights of a good patent. Billy owns only fifteen per cent., which would make nine thousand dollars. So you give us nine thousand and you can keep the other fifty-one thousand in your bank for Mr. Hoquiam, if he should ever dare to show up for it.'

"Well, everybody sat back in their chairs once more, and I thought one old man was going to kiss me, Billy, he looked so pleased. But Mr. Crawford said, 'You mentioned something about stock.' "

" 'Oh, yes!' I had to smile. He was so polite. 'Me and Billy don't need cash. So you give us a certified check for three thousand of the nine and the other six thousand in Nortinghut or Radio stock—the much preferred kind. That's all we want except, naturally, when you get to making them aerials, you send inventor's royalties to me and Billy, and *we* keep Hoquiam's share for him in *our* bank. All we expect is maybe five dollars on every aerial you make.' "

Freda chuckled.

"Mr. Crawford was the first one to stop swearing. When I see how close the old man is who was so pleased to apoplexy, I smile and say: 'We ain't going to quarrel about a dollar or two, are we? You tell your lawyer to make out a nice paper with usual royalty in it for Billy to sign, and if I like it, me and Billy take the stock and the cash and give you the patent-papers.' "

"And?" I ask, as Freda stopped to place some dinner-plates on the rack to warm.

"Well, Mr. Crawford thought it over. Then it seems like he got mad all of a sudden. He turns to his secretary and says, 'Instruct the treasurer to remove Renton's name from the salary-roll and put it on the stockholders list.' So I guess, Billy, they make out a nice contract for you to sign."

She started dripping and stirring cream in the pan she was making giblet gravy in. Dumbly I absorbed what Freda told me bit by bit. Once more I'd proved what a mutt I was. Forgetting that she'd saved and made my life, I'd tried to deceive her. I'd done the only thing I knew would hurt her—slip back into the show business. In return for my dirty work and selfishness, Freda had walked into a millionaire's den, pulled a juicy bone out from between their teeth, made me a profit of six thousand dollars and was finishing by standing over a hot stove to cook my favorite dinner!

"Freda," I say quiet, out of a dry throat, "I'm so low a five-ton truck couldn't roll me no flatter or dirtier. I could talk from now till Ash Wednesday without naming all the things I'm cured of. But, Freda, if you'll forgive me just this once——"

"Billy!" cried Freda, dropping the gravy-spoon and wrapping her athletic arms round my neck. "Why, Billy, it's all right now. First I felt bad, because it looks like you don't like me and the farm so good any more. But I got over it plenty quick because I know just how you felt about playing piano again." Friend wife lowered her voice in confidence. "I tell you something, Billy: Lots of times I can't hardly keep from climbing up on the clothes-line to see can I still do a back flip without falling off the wire."

The coffee-pot boiling over held up the conversation for a minute.

"But," Freda continued, "then I remember all the things I got to be glad about I never had in the show business—a nice home and a nice baby and a nice husband who does just enough damfoolishness to make things interesting, and——"

A tinny, mechanical sound reached us. A moment later, a voice announced,

"Final score of the Yale-California football game, twelve to twelve."

PEERING through the door, I saw Christina and Cecil sitting in front of a fancy, high-priced radio set. I looked at Freda.

"I tell you something, Billy: I got tired going to Redbushes' to hear you play. I didn't want you should know about the radio until after you ate the dinner I been sweating to make good. But—but now you know, you ain't very cross, are you?"

I just looked at her.

"I'm darned if I can ever tell whether you're kidding me or not," I finally said.

"That's nice!" She threw open the oven door, exposing the chicken done to a turn. "Listen, Billy; from now on you save all the wish-bones for Christina."

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A Love-Affair That Caused a Political Upheaval

THE LARIAT

Hugh, the Victim of a Dastardly Act, Resolves to Enter Public Life and Fight for the Old Sioux Tract. But There's an Important Private Matter to be Settled First

By Honoré Willsie

Author of "Still Jim," "Godless Valley," etc.

Illustrations by Remington Schuyler

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

WHEN Charles Grafton, chief engineer of the Eastern Electric Corporation, a Chicago organization, arrived in Fort Sioux, Hugh Stewart learned that the Old Sioux Tract was in danger. The three-million-dollar water-power project required that a part of the tract—and the most valuable part to Hugh—be flooded, and this would prevent exploration of what Hugh believed was one of the greatest fossil-fields in the world. His father-in-law, Pink Morgan, had already acquired options on all the necessary surrounding land, but the ten-thousand-acre tract was Hugh's property, an inheritance from his foster-uncle, and as soon as the terms of Uncle Bookie's will had been complied with—that is, that the heir should for two years refrain from indulging his passion for fossil-hunting and devote himself to running The Lariat Book Shop, which was the old man's unprofitable hobby—Hugh was going to begin digging in the tract. Just before the eccentric Bookie's death—Bookie, who had worshiped Hugh's mother and once killed a man on account of her—the young paleontologist had unearthed a magnificent specimen of triceratops, and this, carefully boxed and stored in a cave, was waiting removal; and it was only one of the treasures the tract might yield.

Naturally, the Fort Sioux people were enthusiastic over the water-power idea, and Hugh found himself almost alone in fighting for the preservation of the tract, except for his helper, Fred Allward, and Red Wolf, an old Sioux Indian, who was his stanch friend.

Hugh was married to Jessie Morgan, daughter of Pink, who ran the Indian Massacre Hotel, but they had drifted completely apart before Miriam Page came into his life. She was business adviser to a bank in Boston, and came in the spring for a vacation at a "dude ranch" in the vicinity. Hugh, who, on the failure of his marriage, believed he was done with women forever, found himself in love with Miriam and knew that it was returned. She went home with Hugh's promise that nothing would ever shake his faith in her and in her caring for him.

But Jessie refused pointblank to give Hugh his freedom. She now realized that she had wasted her chance of happiness, and wanted to regain her husband. Miriam Page should never have him as long as Jessie lived.

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Miriam carried back East her ambitions for Hugh. Pink had told her of the hydraulic project and its bearing on the fate of the Old Sioux Tract. Here, then, was something that would finally turn Hugh to greater things than fossil-hunting. The way to rouse him would be to have him go into politics to fight for the tract, which, as a last resort, could be condemned and taken from him.

Mrs. Morgan, Jessie's mother, believed, too, in Hugh's ability. She was a power in politics and had just been made president of the State Federation of Women's Clubs. She was anxious to have her brilliant but misguided son-in-law go into the legislature, in spite of the fact that she was almost heart-broken over the mess he and his wife had made of things. So she told him that she wanted him to let the women of Wyoming help him in his fight.

This meant, of course, his launching-out into state politics, which was entirely against his inclination. But he finally agreed—after a warning of no quarter to any one whom he discovered trying to block his plans.

"I hope you'll live up to that warning," said his mother-in-law enigmatically. "The first thing we are going to do is to take on that air-plane the government is giving up."

"WHAT has an air-plane got to do with this fight?" demanded Hugh. "Don't try to make a circus of me, Mrs. Morgan."

The little woman sat forward in her favorite attitude on the edge of her chair.

"Let's settle this matter. Do you understand politics, Hughie?"

"No, I don't."

"Hughie, I began life at twelve washing dishes on the Clover Bar ranch. I'm now the leading woman citizen of Wyoming. I did it by having a natural instinct for playing politics."

"I suppose you did," admitted Hugh, reluctant admiration in his voice.

"Then we're that far along." Mrs. Morgan nodded. "Now, Hughie, if you will just agree to put yourself entirely in my hands, we'll save the Old Sioux Tract."

"I'll play the game you've outlined, but I shall insist on discussing details with you. Hanged if I'll stand for cheap methods!"

Mrs. Morgan studied first Hugh's face, then the stove, then her own capable hands. After a moment of this she darted a quick glance again at her son-in-law.

"Very well, Hughie. The air-plane, because it is very modern and really efficient and expeditious. I want you to buy it. You can get it for the price of a jitney, I am told. If you haven't the cash, Jessie will buy it."

"Jessie?" queried Hugh in astonishment.

"Yes, Jessie. Old Auntie Gretchen has died at last, and she left Jessie quite a sum of money. I promised Jessie I wouldn't say how much."

"I'm mighty glad for Jessie," said Hugh heartily, "but I want it understood that Jess isn't to contribute one cent to this campaign."

"Why not?"

"All these years"—the old bitterness was in Hugh's voice—"Jessie has refused to help me. It's too late now."

"My heavens!" exclaimed his mother-in-law. "What a fool you are! Will you buy it yourself?"

Hugh took a turn up and down the room.

"I have a few thousand dollars in the bank at Cheyenne. I will place this at your disposal if you think it best. I have complete confidence in your acumen as far as managing such a fund is concerned."

Mrs. Morgan flushed, but said quietly:

"Thank you, Hughie. Now then, the first thing is to call a meeting of the Conservation Committee of the State Federation. After that, we'll have a session of the committee of women who handled the Children's Code. We'll pay the car-fares. We'll hold the meetings here in The Lariat. It has a lot of Bookie in it—and is getting a lot of you"—glancing quickly at the fossil specimens that now packed the empty book-shelves. "Women feel atmosphere much quicker than men." She rose, head in air. "This is the biggest evening's work of my life, Hughie. Good-night."

Hugh looked at her half humorously, half puzzled.

"Good-night," he said, with a one-sided smile.

Several days were consumed in gathering together the members of the Conservation Committee. During this time Hugh, at Mrs. Morgan's suggestion, outlined in his mind the stories which he wished to tell the

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committee, but, also at her suggestion, he said little to Grafton or to the old guard, which suddenly ceased to hold sessions in The Lariat. It was the first concrete intimation to Hugh that the town was lining itself up against him.

A DAY or so after his conversation with Mrs. Morgan, Jessie rode down from the ranch, which was closing up the dude end of its business for the season. It was evening when she tied Magpie in front of the Lariat and walked slowly into the store. Hugh looked up from his note-book. His ideas of beauty were of late entirely biased by his intense admiration for Miriam's delicate charm. But, in spite of his deep preoccupation, he was conscious of a reluctant admiration for something in Jessie he never before had sensed.

She was wearing corduroy riding-breeches and—the fall nights were cold—a heavy, soft riding-coat of white cheviot. She was bareheaded and, in spite of the frost, her flannel blouse was open at the throat. She swung, with her easy, deliberate stride, the length of the store without greeting Hugh and stood looking out at the brilliant moonlight on the river. There was in her manner, in the set of her broad shoulders, the swing of her slender thighs a forcefulness and a grace that made Hugh think of a mountain-lion he once had watched striding up to a hidden spring for a drink. Jessie the lazy, Jessie the indifferent was showing a purposeful strength that was not the less apparent for its grace. Hugh's little thrill of admiration was followed by a sudden added tensity of nerves. After all, Jessie was a force, and evidently rather a tremendous one. He was, then, not to be allowed freedom in the enjoyment of his love any more than he was to be allowed to pursue his profession in peace. Very well; he would fight for both.

Jessie turned finally.

"Hughie," she said, "I suppose you won't believe me when I say that I'm sorry they are heckling you about the Old Sioux Tract."

"Yes; I believe you," replied Hugh. "But I must admit that I'm not particularly moved by your sorrow. You never came across until another woman showed you your mistake."

"I know it," answered Jessie, with unprecedented humbleness; then she added bitterly: "Though you never showed the side to me you showed to her. However, I didn't come to discuss that. I want to help in your campaign."

"No!" cried Hugh. "If you think it's possible for me to forget, even now, the suffering your sneers about my work have cost me, you're more stupid than I think you are."

"But you are taking help from my mother."

"Oh, she! Why, she's only a woman to me. Never has been anything more. But you were my wife. And, at first, I loved you madly."

Jessie's eyes darkened, but she did not speak for a long moment. Then she murmured,

"So I am not to help?"

"No," repeated Hugh, still bitterly; "you are not to help."

"And what is Miriam doing?" asked Jessie.

"She can do nothing, of course, but advise and sympathize."

"And when, Hughie, do you plan to begin the fight for your divorce?"

"It's to be a fight, is it, Jessie?"

"Yes."

"You know I wouldn't fight a woman for freedom, don't you? You are deliberately planning to torture me."

Jessie uttered a long and curious laugh which was interrupted by the entrance of Fred Allward. He greeted Jessie and turned to Hugh.

"Now, looka here, Hughie; if you think I can outfit and stay up on the tract while you are putting up this fight, you're mistaken. You let me go up to Cheyenne and tell that Utilities Commission what I think of 'em. I just ain't going to hunt fossils for a while."

He spat into the stove with a finality of gesture that brooked no argument. Hugh lit a cigarette and managed at the same time to smile one-sidedly.

"Very well, Fred. Mrs. Morgan is my campaign manager. You go over and get some orders from her."

Fred swallowed his entire quid, choked, blinked and roared:

"Who? Me? Orders from Mrs. Morgan? You're plumb loco! Why, I wouldn't take orders from that woman——"

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"She's my mother, Fred," said Jessie in her lazy voice that now carried an edge.

"And it isn't to save your life, old-timer," added Hugh. "It's to save the tract."

"To save the tract! You mean to say you're trusting her to do that? Now, I *am* going up to Cheyenne. Why, you poor maverick, you, that woman made a failure of her own husband and her own daughter! And she darn near made a failure of you. How do you expect her to run a fight like this?"

"Nevertheless, Fred," said Hugh firmly, "she's made a wonderful success of herself in politics, and in that one thing I've entire confidence in her. You go on over there to the Indian Massacre and tell her I want her to explain our plans to you and that she's to use you."

Fred stood stiffly before Hugh, rumpling his gray beard fiercely. It was quite obvious that Hugh was asking the ultimate sacrifice of him.

"I ain't never taken orders from a woman in all my life, not even my mother after I was big enough to run away. That's the secret of my success. And Mrs. Morgan always did get my goat. That perky, smarty, new-woman kind of a woman! And she can't see a joke."

"You don't have to disparage her before Jessie, do you, Fred?" asked Hugh.

Fred apparently, did not hear the question.

"I don't like the way she's acted to you or Pink. I don't like it. But if you want me to go take orders from her, I'll go. But it's clearly understood I'm doing it for you—and you only."

HE TURNED stiffly and marched toward the door, running blindly into Johnny Parnell, giving no heed to Johnny's badinage and slamming the door after himself.

"Oh, here you are, Jessie!" exclaimed Johnny, turning from staring after Fred. "Are you ready to start back for the ranch?"

Jessie, who all this time had been standing by the window, now looking out at the moonlit river, now studying Hugh's head against the lamplight, buttoned her coat and came slowly forward.

"All ready, Johnny."

"Just a minute, Jess. What's all this about you and Mrs. Morgan planning to throw and hog-tie the Eastern Electric Corporation, Hughie? Are you honestly going to try to fight?"

"Yes, I am, Johnny. Are you with me or against me?"

For once the young rider's face was entirely serious. He looked from Jessie, now revealed in the full flare of the lamp-glow, to Hugh, half turned from the desk.

"Hughie," he said, "you and I might as well know how we stand. You and Jess both know how I feel about her. And I've always admired and liked you, Hughie. But since Miriam Page came out here, I tell you my blood's been boiling steadily. Not that I don't wish the two of you would get a divorce and let me have a new chance to win Jessie. But to see you, Hughie, neglect a woman like Jessie, no matter what the circumstances are, makes me want to shoot you."

"Hughie hasn't neglected me, Johnny," said Jessie slowly. "At least, all that has been mutual and more or less agreed upon."

"Then why do you look the way you do?" demanded Johnny sternly. "I got a right to know. Do you still love him?"

Both men watched Jessie keenly. She turned a little pale, but shrugged her shoulders as she answered indifferently,

"Yes."

Hugh jumped abruptly to his feet.

"Wait a moment! I can't be silent while you two put me in the wrong. I put in years trying to make Jessie a part of my life, and she wouldn't have it. And I've been perfectly open and honest with her about everything."

"Yes, you have, Hughie." Jessie's eyes were deep and tragic, but her tone was carefully indolent. "I've been a fool, and I'm paying for it. But, as I've told you before, I'm going to do my very best to keep you from throwing yourself away on a woman who isn't big enough for you."

"Big enough!" snorted Johnny bitterly. "Big enough! What's the idea? Bookie was a big man, but I never could get this stuff about Hughie's throwing himself away because he was too big for fossils. A man that ain't strong enough to put himself where he belongs in the world ain't big, and that's all there is about it."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Hugh. "Forget it. So you are against me, too, in this fight, Johnny?"

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"Yes, I am," replied the young rider shortly. "I've gotta be. Come on, Jessie! It will be after midnight when we get home." And the two left The Lariat in silence.

Hugh paced the floor for a time. He was resentful, puzzled, angry and determined as he never before had been—and lonely. After all his years in Fort Sioux, the town, to his last boyhood friend, was against him. And although he recognized the overwhelming appeal of business progress to the American town, he could not understand why some one of the men who knew him well had not come to him to express sympathy for the stand he had taken, even while not agreeing with him.

Ever since Bookie's death, Hugh had missed him poignantly and sincerely, but now the aching desire to turn to the wise old man in his trouble was almost unendurable. And, desiring Bookie so, he was suddenly impelled to read for the first time the old man's will. The copy of it had lain in the bottom of the cash-register ever since Judge Proctor had sent it to him. He spread it out on the desk and perused it several times. Then he replaced it, lit his pipe and sat thoughtfully before the stove. He had been obeying the terms of the will as a discharge of a part of his deep indebtedness to his Uncle Bookie. And now he wondered if, perchance, he were not, instead, adding to his indebtedness. Anyhow, was it not possible that the two years in The Lariat were to teach him how to protect his work from the vandals of commercialism? It was past midnight when the guttering lamp-wick sent him to bed.

THE Committee on Conservation met in The Lariat about a week after Grafton's first session with Hugh. It was not a large committee. Six women, all of them young except Mrs. Morgan, gathered in the book store on a brisk fall afternoon. They had come from little and big towns all over the huge state. After each of them had explained at length and in detail how she had disposed of her housework and her children for the period of her absence, the chairman called the committee to order. This done, Mrs. Morgan stated the purpose of the meeting.

"Ladies, one of the greatest fossil-fields in the world lies in the neighborhood of Fort Sioux. It is threatened with destruction, and I asked your chairman to call you together that we might plan how to save it."

A tall, tanned woman in a faded blue suit asked abruptly,

"Why save it?"

"I'd rather have electricity in my house than the finest fossil ever exhumed," said the member from the Jackson Hole country.

Mrs. Morgan turned to Hugh, who, decidedly embarrassed, was leaning against a bookcase.

"Hughie," she said briskly, "why save it?"

All eyes at once turned to the tall, melancholy figure which now moved from the book-shelves to the old place before the counter. Hugh talked for half an hour, picturing in his inimitable way that strange dead life with which the Old Sioux Tract teemed. His audience was extraordinarily attentive to the end. He closed quite simply.

"You are asking why this life of the past is so valuable to the present. You all remember when the Germans overran Belgium and sacked the library of Louvain. You all remember the wave of anger and violent protest that swept over the civilized world when the story of that ungenerous, that sacrilegious and futile destruction got abroad. And why should we have felt so keenly? Those books were only the dead records of a dead past. Ah, you say to me, man has developed from savagery only because of his capacity to keep records—records by which society could absorb all that had been done in order to do more. Civilization, ladies, could not afford to lose the library of Louvain. And we knew it.

"Neither can civilization afford to lose the Old Sioux Tract. It is, if you please, a sealed library of priceless manuscripts. These manuscripts may revolutionize our ideas on evolution, on religion, on the birth and growth and destiny of man. If I could succeed in letting the world know what the Old Sioux Tract is and what danger threatens it, the world would be more than indignant with the people of Wyoming. My plea to you is: help me to save this great state from an irretrievably stupid act."

He paused, bowed awkwardly and went out. It was not until two hours had passed that he returned to find Mrs. Morgan waiting for him, alone. She had deposited the committee in the Indian

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Massacre and was eager to make a report to Hugh.

"Well," he asked, "what did they think of my speech?"

"Speech!" repeated his mother-in-law vaguely. "Oh, they didn't say much about it. They were much more interested in you than in what you said. As soon as you had gone out, Mrs. Ackroyd said: 'My! Hasn't he a sad face? He really feels bad about it, poor thing!' Mrs. Ames cut in with: 'Didn't he look interesting, standing there with all the books and the fossils behind him? He thinks a lot of those stones, I can tell you.' That stout woman who sat nearest the stove wanted to know how old you were and where Jessie was, and another one of them—I think it was Mrs. Friedland—said she'd heard a lot of gossip about you and women, but she knew it couldn't be true and she didn't care if it was. But the last and best was what Mrs. Tanner said. 'He's suffering for Wyoming, that poor dear thing! Girls, we've got to help him!'"

"Good Lord in heaven!" shouted Hugh. "Are they crazy? They absolutely failed to get the idea. I told you I couldn't make a speech women would care about."

"It was exactly the kind of speech that I wanted you to make," returned Mrs. Morgan. "It got your personality over to them. I'm perfectly delighted. And we got our program sketched out—that is, as far as their share is concerned."

Hugh clasped both hands to his head and groaned,

"What have I let myself in for?"

"Let me tell you the plans," Mrs. Morgan went on, as if Hugh had not spoken.

Hugh looked at her. Irritation, admiration and protest struggled for a moment in his eyes; then, with a sudden relaxing of his long body, he burst into a shout of laughter. Mrs. Morgan stared at him in astonishment.

"Don't tell me the plans, please, Mrs. Morgan. I've changed my mind about wanting to know details," said Hugh, when he could speak. "Just tell me what to do, and I'll do it. I am a poor fool, but I can recognize a master hand in this."

His mother-in-law considered his plea; then she said soberly:

"I think you are right. I don't want your mind cluttered up with details. Don't come over to supper to-night. I'll send you a tray here. You aren't to mix with them familiarly at all."

Hugh laughed again as she trotted out the door. He had not felt so diverted since Miriam's departure.

"Uncle Bookie," he said softly, "how you would have enjoyed this! I'd give a year of my life to have you here now."

TWO days later the committee on the Children's Code Bill gathered in the book store. Hugh watched them as they came in and settled themselves in the chairs before the fire. It seemed to him that these women were quite another type from those who had composed the Conservation Committee. They were older, and their conversation was centered on Governor Eli, who was asking for renomination to office. It struck Hugh that here was a group with whom he could get on. They were clean-cut, efficient, and their knowledge of state politics was almost as startling to him as their scathing comments on the governor. He made the same speech to them that he had made to the Committee on Conservation. But when he had finished, they did not allow him to go out.

"How would you make the most money out of the tract?" asked one of the women. "By selling it to the Eastern Electric Corporation or by selling fossils off it?"

Hugh was staggered. He looked at the woman with such astonishment that she blushed to the roots of her white hair.

"I didn't mean to affront you, Mr. Stewart!" she exclaimed.

"I am a little affronted," admitted Hugh. "It hadn't occurred to me that any one could think I had any money-interest in this."

"I don't know why we shouldn't think so," returned his questioner stoutly. "You gave up fossils this last spring so as to inherit your uncle's big property, didn't you?"

Hugh set his teeth. This was the sort of thing a man who entered public life let himself in for. After a short struggle, which showed plainly in his face, he said:

"I don't care to go into the reasons that led me to give two years to The Lariat. But I will say that if we can prevent the flooding of the Old Sioux Tract, I'll make it over to the state of Wyoming as a permanent fossil-field."

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"Then what do you get out of this campaign?" asked another member.

"I get the satisfaction," said Hugh, "of having saved something that is of immense value, though it can't be measured in money."

The chairman nodded, but said, turning to Mrs. Morgan,

"All this is very interesting, Madam President, but I don't see where this committee comes in."

"Don't you, Madam Chairman?" exclaimed Mrs. Morgan quickly. "Think! What have you to offer the women of this state to hold the solidarity you gained when the Children's Code was lost?"

"I know all about that. But I certainly am not going to make myself a laughing-stock by offering fossils in the place of children."

Hugh turned from the women to stare out the window. An old Sioux was driving a herd of moth-eaten ponies toward the railroad corral. It was cold up on the plains, for a snow-flurry was powdering the yellow top of the cañon wall. For a moment he did not hear what was being said by the women, for he was realizing, with exceeeding bitterness, that once more he had failed to show how his work tied up with life. He was roused by a question.

"How did you stand on the Children's Code, Mr. Stewart?"

"I was for it, of course."

"Did you urge your assemblyman to vote for it?" asked the chairman. "Did you take any active interest in it?"

"No, I didn't," returned Hugh, frankly puzzled.

"Yet you ask us to fight for something that's of as little value to the state as fossils."

"I didn't understand that it was a swapping proposition," said Hugh stiffly.

"All politics is swapping," returned the chairman.

"So is this, if you'd just use your brain to get the point!" cried Mrs. Morgan. "You need a man for the women to fasten to. Here's a man who's——"

She was interrupted by Hugh.

"I'd much prefer you'd drop the whole matter as far as this committee is concerned, Mrs. Morgan," he said.

The chairman looked at him keenly.

"A man that's going into politics, Mr. Stewart, has to leave his dignity behind him."

"I have no intention of going into politics, madam," replied Hugh. "I shall fight as best I can for this, but I certainly shall never be a politician." And he picked up his hat and walked out, leaving the field to the women.

NOR did the astute Mrs. Morgan succeed in beguiling the Children's Code Committee into taking Hugh's troubles on as a substitute for the code for which, politically speaking, they had fought, bled and died. She was puzzled but not discouraged.

"I ought to have known," she said to Hugh that evening, "that they'd be too old and too experienced to fall for you as easily as the Conservation Committee did. I'm keeping 'em on here for a day or so, letting 'em wrangle over state politics, while I do more thinking."

"Let them go," urged Hugh, "and let me get to work with the men in power."

"You don't seem to understand, Hughie, that the Eastern Electric Corporation has money and we haven't. And, moreover, Mrs. Ellis, the chairman, has a brother on the Public Utilities Commission."

Hugh sighed.

"Well, what is their objection to helping me?"

"Just what they said yesterday. They don't see any flesh-and-blood interest in fossils—not that I expected them to. But I did think they'd see possibilities in you. But, you see, they all are women who've made their way up from the ranches, and they don't see things like they ought to—not that they'd admit it. But I realize that, now that I've looked them over. The other committee was this new generation, and they are softer. Don't talk to me any more. I must think."

And think she did, while Pink fled from the hotel and sought refuge in the barber shop. Hugh, in the mean time, walked the floor of The Lariat and debated the feasibility of casting off Mrs. Morgan and going up to Cheyenne to face the Public Utilities Commission alone. Grafton, he knew, was there now.

It was while the Children's Code Committee was in session that he received a letter from Miriam in response to his

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that told of his trouble. It was just the sort of letter that he had desired, full of sympathy and understanding, and urging him on to the fight. She made no concrete suggestions save that he put his plan before the public himself. The letter was immensely heartening to Hugh. And so was a short visit paid him by Fred Allward.

FRED clumped into The Lariat the morning after Hugh's speech before the Children's Code Committee, wearing an air-man's outfit.

"Well, Hughie," he said, "here I am, into it up to my forelock!"

"For heaven's sake, Fred, what are you up to now?" demanded Hugh.

"You told me to take orders from her. She told me to go over to the air-camp and get myself learnt to drive that air-plane she's bid in. Say—I hate her as much as ever, but she's smart. You got to admit it. She said if I could drive mules and a jitney, I could drive an air-plane. Say, Hughie; I feel like I was driving one of our big stone birds come to life. I'm to drive you when I get learnt."

"Fred," said Hugh, "I'll trust you to dangle me at the end of a rope over a thousand-foot drop, and I'll trust you to keep a team of ten wild mules in order, but I'll be hanged if I'll let you take me up in a plane."

Fred looked hurt.

"Dog-gone it, Hughie; don't go and pi this idea of hers! It's good. It's advertising. She's up to date, though I thank God I ain't her husband."

Hugh burst into sudden laughter.

"All right, Fred! I'm glad you think we're in good hands. When the government aviator tells me you are a full-fledged air-man, I'll go up with you."

"That's good!" Fred's tone was mollified. "How do you like my outfit, Hughie? Got it from that little aviator, Martin. Takes about ten years off me, eh?"

"Yes, it does, Fred, and if you'd shave your beard, you'd lose ten years more."

This was an old debate between the two, always much enjoyed by Hugh and much resented by Fred. But now, to Hugh's vast amusement, the old miner felt his beard regretfully, sighed, walked out and headed for the barber shop.

Hugh avoided the members of the committee as best he could, but on the second day of the session in the Indian Massacre, Mrs. Ellis appeared in The Lariat. Hugh placed a chair for her before the fire and waited for her to speak. There was something he liked about this stout, gray-haired woman, although he felt her hostility to him.

"Mr. Stewart," she said abruptly, "we're leaving to-morrow, and I wanted to tell you myself why we're turning down Mrs. Morgan's proposition."

"I don't know what her proposition is exactly." Hugh spoke frankly. "I asked her not to tell me details."

"That's where you're a fool, then," returned Mrs. Ellis, with equal frankness. "She's just as cold and unscrupulous as she is smart. I've told her that to her face. And that's not saying she isn't going to make the best president the federation ever had, because she is. Well, in so many words, she wants you to be our candidate for governor, and I don't see it."

"Good Lord!" shouted Hugh. "I should hope not! The woman is crazy!"

"No; she isn't in the least." Mrs. Ellis watched Hugh keenly. "But she can't put this particular deal over with us."

"She certainly can't! Here—I'm going to bring her over here and settle that dream of hers once and for all."

Hugh rose, but Mrs. Ellis leaned forward and put a plump hand on his wrist.

"Sit down, Mr. Stewart, and let's you and me understand each other before any one else comes in on it."

Hugh sat down again, his long jaw set, his gray eyes smoldering. Mrs. Ellis went on slowly, choosing her words with more and more care as Hugh's beautiful mouth twitched more and more ominously.

"Mrs. Morgan's proposition is that, if we make you governor, the Children's Code will be enacted into law and administered exactly as we wish it to be administered. Have you ever read that code?"

"No," said Hugh shortly.

"Well, it was prepared by the foremost specialists in this country—by people who are experts in the breeding, care and training of children, by people who have had years of experience in handling delinquent children and dependent children, normal and abnormal children, in educating children for self-support, for citizenship, for

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fatherhood and motherhood. Had it gone through, it would have made Wyoming the first state in the Union in handling children. And in another generation or two it would have produced a citizenry that no other state and no other nation could touch."

THE stout woman spoke with a clarity and vehemence that roused Hugh from his contemplation of himself. He listened attentively.

"And now," she said, "your mother-in-law proposes that a man as one-sided as you, a childless and, I understand, a wifeless man, be put up to save a fossil-field and by stealth, as it were, to put through this bill. You couldn't do it. Why, I'd laugh if it wasn't such a serious matter."

"Serious to you or to me?" asked Hugh.

"To the state of Wyoming," replied Mrs. Ellis sharply.

"You can put your mind at rest on that point, madam," said Hugh. "I shall not be candidate for governor."

"Let me tell you two things." Mrs. Ellis was again watching Hugh's face attentively. "One, you can save your fossil-field only as governor. Politics absolutely control the natural resources of this state. Efforts at the capital have focused for years on water-power sites. There's a big battle between state and federal control, and it's been expedient to concentrate more and more control in the governorship. You don't know all this, Mrs. Morgan says. Fact number two: the women, for various reasons, will swing the next gubernatorial election, and Mrs. Morgan, because she is Mrs. Morgan and because she's president of the federation, probably could make you governor."

"And what do you want me to do?"

"I'm not making any suggestions to you," answered the chairman of the Children's Code Committee. "I'm merely telling you why I stand where I do. The man whom I shall back for governor must be a virile man, a man with fatherhood in his soul, an unselfish, social-minded human being in whom we could have absolute faith that he'd fight to the death for the Children's Code."

"Evidently I don't measure up," said Hugh, with a one-sided smile.

"You don't believe yourself that you do, do you?" asked Mrs. Ellis, speaking gently for the first time.

Hugh looked from Mrs. Ellis's plump, earnest face out to the far yellow field where an air-plane reeled in drunken flight just above the sand. Something in his interlocutor's eyes had brought back Uncle Bookie's dying words: "Don't make any mistake—for God's sake don't! Give all—all." He sighed deeply and turned back to Mrs. Ellis.

"No"—slowly—"I can't answer to that description."

"It's a great pity that you don't!"

"It's possible, isn't it," asked Hugh sadly, "that I am valuable in my chosen field and that my field may some day be as valuable to humanity as the Children's Code?"

"You don't really mean that, do you?"

Hugh was about to reply when Mrs. Morgan darted in, a little breathless, her eyes bright with curiosity.

"I hope I don't interrupt!" she exclaimed.

"No," replied Hugh; "because I want you to hear what I have to say to Mrs. Ellis." He repeated his last question and Mrs. Ellis's counter-query, and continued, "What I want to say is that while I would find it impossible to persuade myself to give up the fight for the Old Sioux Tract, I certainly do refuse to imperil the Children's Code by allowing you, Mrs. Morgan, to use it as a pawn to manipulate me into the governorship."

"But you don't refuse to be a candidate, do you?" cried Mrs. Morgan.

Hugh's jaw showed white under his ears.

"Yes; I do refuse to be. I may not have fatherhood in my soul, but I do love this old state of Wyoming, and I do think the Children's Code Bill should not be imperiled by me or any other man with a one-track mind. I've made a big mistake in putting myself into your hands, Mrs. Morgan. I hadn't realized what you would do with me."

His mother-in-law turned bitterly to Mrs. Ellis.

"What have you been saying? Now I've got all my work to do over!"

"I've merely told him facts," said Mrs. Ellis, rising. "A trifling job that you neglected."

"May I ask," snapped Mrs. Morgan,

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"who your candidate for governor is going to be?"

"I haven't any idea who he'll be, Mrs. Morgan, but it won't be some one who'll sell his brain to you sight unseen."

Hugh had risen, too.

"I haven't done that, Mrs. Ellis," he said quietly.

"Not intentionally, I believe, after this talk with you," she said. "But it's a great pity that a man with a spirit and a personality like yours should let himself be so entirely hipped on one idea that he seems to lack qualities he probably possesses." And she left the shop, followed by Mrs. Morgan in violent eruption.

IT WAS not yet mid-afternoon, but after a moment's hesitation, Hugh put on his mackinaw and spurs and, locking the door behind him, hastened over to the hotel corral, where he saddled and mounted Fossil. Then he rode slowly down the sandy street.

It was a beautiful afternoon, crisp and clear. Two Indians and a white rider were roping steers in the railroad corral. They worked in a cloud of yellow dust through which their brilliant neckerchiefs could be seen like little darting flames. A huge pack-outfit passed Hugh on the south edge of the town, covered wagon bouncing and jangling, pack-horses shaking unwilling heads, mules braying—an oil-prospector's outfit returning after a summer's work.

Hugh worked slowly along toward the bridge which lay a mile beyond the edge of Fort Sioux. He had no special destination in view. He had left The Lariat with the feeling that if he remained another moment under its roof, he would smother. He was angry and, to his utter astonishment, angry with himself—an unusual condition for Hugh.

Wyoming had for years, of course, been an equal-suffrage state. Hugh had had no feeling at all of feminizing himself by allowing a woman to manage him politically. But, after his talk with Mrs. Ellis, he was feeling distinctly that in not fighting his fight with men he had belittled himself. Yet he knew that no such thought had entered Mrs. Ellis's mind.

Fossil trotted rapidly across the bridge, and Hugh headed him toward the trail up to the plains. He had no reason, he argued with himself, for this sense of anger. He was only experiencing once more in this contact with the Children's Code Committee that old and universally contemptuous attitude of the American toward the man whose work did not show an obvious and practical contact with life. But he could not, for once, comfort himself with the old sense of aloofness and superiority. His anger toward himself must, he realized, be based on something he had not as yet been able to formulate.

Fossil, feeling the reins still loose on his neck, when he reached the plains at the top of the corkscrew trail, stopped of his own accord to get breath after the heavy ascent. Hugh sighed and turned his attention to the panorama before him. It had been many days since he had left the cañon, and the view, of which he never wearied, intrigued him for a moment from his gloomy contemplation of self.

All the vivid summer tints of purple sage and bright-green bunch-grass had disappeared. Vast, undulating wastes of buff and sunset-brown stretched westward toward the black timber shadows that banded themselves at the foot of the brilliant blue peaks of the White Wolves.

Fall clouds were shifting in their unspeakable glory across the cañon, now seeming about to drop like rose-tinted veils over the orange ribbon of the river, now like golden gossamer blown in titanic filaments far down the cañon, where they met the crimson buttes and vast columns that marked the river's course—met them, caressed them for a lovely moment, then melted from gold to silver and so on into the ever-waiting, ever-brooding sky. Clouds of purest scarlet sailed with unbelievable majesty among the exquisite crests of the White Wolves. Clouds of purple hung over the far, undulating wastes of the Old Sioux Tract to the north, and, as Hugh looked, once again ravished by the old, old wonder of the sight, they disappeared beyond the uttermost other horizon.

Fossil jerked his great body fretfully, and Hugh, catching sight of a mighty spiral of dust rising on the trail from the White Wolves, spurred the horse toward it. The trail led to the Clifton Pass and on into the wild-horse country. Some one must be bringing down a herd. Hugh had a sudden yearning for the old days when

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he had ridden range on his summer vacations for Bookie, and he set the big roan to the gallop.

SUDDENLY it seemed to him, as the indescribable odor of plains smote his face, that nothing, nothing was worth his exile in The Lariat, that out of the tangle and disappointment of his life there could be but one door to content—to return somehow to the open. The rise and fall of the horse, the sweet, sharp wind in his ears, the freedom from human urgings and irritations—God, what a fool he was to submit himself to all that had occurred in the past six months!

He had galloped a couple of long miles along the winding trail before he espied the cause of the dust. Some one was bringing in a herd of horses. He made a wide détour to reach the rear of the herd without breaking it, waving his hand with a shout as he perceived that the rider on the pinto pony was Red Wolf.

"Wild horses, eh, Red Wolf?" he cried, as he joined his old friend. "Good Lord, what a haul! A hundred and fifty? Hello, Eagle's Wing!"—to Red Wolf's son, a huge, solemn-faced Indian on a black mare.

"Hundred forty," said Red Wolf, with a grin. His blue-flannel shirt was so powdered with dust as to be almost indistinguishable from the bronze of his face.

"Where did you get them?"

"Black Basin country back of White Wolves. For government."

"Have any trouble getting them in?" asked Hugh, bringing Fossil to bear on a lagging mare.

"Oh, not so heap much. All too tired now, too hungry make much trouble."

"Well, it's a fine haul!" exclaimed Hugh. "Lord! It's a thousand years since I brought in my last bunch of wild horses. Fossil's mother was a foal in that lot. Remember?"

Red Wolf nodded and rode to the left as a huge dapple-gray stallion suddenly reared and made a break for an unexpected draw. Hugh loosened and recoiled his lariat, then followed in with a look of vast interest.

And Red Wolf had reason to be glad of Hugh's help not long after, for as the herd drew nearer to the river cañon and smelled water, it took all the skill of the three riders to prevent a stampede. In fact, the trip down the corkscrew trail was a miracle and nothing less, with unshod hoofs thundering, small stones flying, screams of crowded brood-mares, hoarse neigh of stallions and a streaming welter of dark flying manes and tails against the red cañon walls, doubly crimson in the setting sun. A colt or two fell over the edge; but the main body made the passage in safety.

Once on the level cañon floor, Hugh galloped ahead to guard the bridge—a stampede through the town might result in casualties—while Red Wolf and his son were able, with much whooping, hard riding and lashing with long lariat-ropes, to force the frantic beasts away from the steep and fatal brim toward which the gray stallion was leading them, to the watering-ford near the bridge.

The horses had finished drinking and were milling anxiously on the level floor again when a jitney containing Mrs. Morgan and her committee buzzed halfway across the bridge and paused.

"Can we get across, Hughie," called his mother-in-law, "before they reach the bridge? We're going over to the air-camp. Fred flew up the cañon half an hour ago, and we want to see him land."

Hugh shook his head, his eyes on the uneasy herd.

"You'd better go back. There's no telling what these brutes will do. Good heavens! Here he comes now."

Above the uproar made by the jitney, above the churning of the herd sounded the fusillade of the approaching plane, zigzagging drunkenly just over the water. A tiny figure, waving impotent arms, appeared on the run from the air-plane camp. An eagle hung frozen in the blue above, as if he sensed the impending calamity and was paralyzed by it. The milling of the herd changed to frenzied circling. The air-plane made an abortive effort to turn toward the town side of the river, twisted completely round, with nose toward the air-camp, dragged one wing in the water and charged through the shallows of the drinking-ford into the lunging herd.

Fossil reared and fought to turn into the bridge. Mrs. Morgan, like the eagle, seemed for a moment paralyzed; then she set the machine to backing while the women with her wrung their hands and seemed to

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scream, though no sound could be heard above the air-plane and the herd. Hugh, one eye on the jitney, dug the spurs deep and held Fossil firmly across the end of the bridge while he fought back the maddened beasts that hurled themselves against him. The air-plane circled viciously for a moment; then, leaving behind it an awful, screaming carnage, it ran straight across the cañon and brought up against the far red wall. The gray stallion, with blood-stained mane, appeared from the chaos of legs beside the drinking-ford, and in the sudden half-stillness that succeeded the departure of the air-plane, he squealed ferociously and, thoroughly amuck, charged the bridge.

The mares which Hugh had been lashing back with his lariat fell aside. As the gray stallion reared to strike at Fossil, a small black stallion charged through the retreating mares and hit the gray on the flank. He struck deep, for his bite had all the impact of the little brute's leap through the mares. It brought the gray down on his back. In the moment's respite, Hugh looked back at the jitney. It was stalled across the middle of the bridge. He swore and began hastily to coil his lariat, a feat as extraordinary as it was beautiful in its grace, for Fossil was rearing and plunging. Hugh hung on with his spurs, coiled the rope and waited.

IT WAS evident that here was an ancient enmity that the assault by the air-plane had precipitated. The gray, once more on his feet, would have charged Hugh again, but the black, frenzied by the sight and smell of his enemy's blood, would not permit it. He reared and struck at the gray's head, gouging his neck as he came down. The gray squealed and turned to do battle.

Hugh's saddle-gun was loaded, but he was loath to injure either of the beautiful brutes. Once more he glanced at the jitney. Mrs. Morgan was wringing her hands over the steering-wheel. A stallion gone amuck is almost as dangerous and quite as vicious as a mad elephant. Hugh hesitated for a moment. Eagle's Wing, over by the watering-ford, was helping his father to his feet. The old Indian apparently was terribly injured. Hugh backed Fossil slowly along the bridge until he was far enough from the huge battle to avoid the lunging and terrible hoofs. He swung his rope carefully, caught the rearing gray round the two fore legs, and as the great brute fell, he turned Fossil and ran him to within a few yards of the stalled jitney. Then, while the gray rolled and squealed, and before he could cause a perceptible slack in the lariat, which the well-trained Fossil strained to keep taut, Hugh leaped from the saddle, pack-rope and Fossil's hackamore in hand, and with unbelievable quickness roped the gray's hind legs.

The black, in the mean time, had paused in bewilderment at the sudden, inexplicable departure of his enemy. But as Hugh dismounted and leaped toward the gray, he squealed and charged. Hugh slipped a hackamore over the gray's head and was fastening it to the bridge rail as the black leaped with all fours on his helpless foe. Hugh jumped aside, but not quite quickly enough to escape a flying hoof which ripped his corduroy jacket from neck to belt. The leaping black brought up against Fossil, still struggling to keep taut the lariat-rope that now was beginning to twist the saddle. Fossil was in no mood to be tampered with, and he promptly bit the black on the cheek with an expert inciseness that brought the doughty warrior to a moment's pause. In that moment Hugh released the lariat from the gray and, running under the black's outstretched neck, mounted and rode down upon the angry little stallion.

The black had no intention of turning tail, but Hugh did not purpose using the lariat until he had forced the black out of fighting-distance of the gray. Fossil, angry and excited, needed no urging. He rushed, squealing, to the battle, biting his adversary as shoulder met shoulder and Hugh lashed the foam-flecked black face with all the force of the coiled rope. The stallion leaped backward, teeth bared, and Hugh twirled the lariat and roped him round the neck. Then, as the stallion reared for a charge, he shouted at Fossil, dug the spurs deep and raced past the black. The rope came taut, and the astonished stallion, choking and kicking, was turned and dragged from the bridge to the sand, where shortly Hugh had him hobbled and staked.

Hugh wiped his face on his sleeve and looked about him. The other horses were

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scattered in small groups over the cañon floor. Without the leadership of the stallions, they would not be too difficult to herd, and the jitney no longer was of moment. Hugh ran quickly over to the two Indians. Eagle's Wing was tying his neck-scarf round his father's chest, which was fearfully lacerated. Hugh helped as best he could, then said:

"Take him in to the doctor, Eagle's Wing. I'll look out for the herd."

THEN he galloped across the sand to the scene of the air-plane wreck. Fred evidently had been able to get some sort of control of the engine before he brought up against the wall, for, except for a crumpled wing, Hugh could not see that the plane showed outward signs of injury. Fred was sitting in the sand, making grimaces, while Martin, red of hair and red of face, bound up his arm and cursed him.

"Well, Fred?" said Hugh soberly.

Fred looked up, very drawn as to new-shaven face, very much disheveled as to hair and clothes. But Martin gave him no chance to speak.

"I had told the damn fool fifty times," shouted Martin, "not to go near the plane unless I was with him! But no sooner does he get rid of that beard than he thinks he's an ace. He's lucky to get out with a busted arm. My God! A real air-man would 'a' been killed."

"Not if he'd ever driven a twelve-mule team," interposed Hugh grimly. "Pretty much used up, old-timer?"

"Yes. Anybody else hurt?" asked Fred feebly.

"Old Red Wolf is pretty badly cut up, and there's a hellish mess among the horses by the ford. I'll go back there and put the brutes out of their misery. Can you get him over to the doc without me, Martin? Then I'll stay here and ride herd. Mrs. Morgan was still stalled on the bridge when I left. Look out for the stallion I've got roped there."

Fred looked up at Hugh reproachfully.

"I told you that woman would ruin me," he said. "I tell you I'm through with her now. I'm going back to fossil-digging."

"I don't blame you, old pardner," said Hugh, turning Fossil back toward the ford. "When you invite me next time to go riding with you, I'd prefer you to make it mules."

After Hugh with his saddle-gun had silenced the screams and stilled the tossing legs that marked the crimson welter by the river, he turned his attention to the wandering herd. He had gathered up fifty trembling mares and was about to drive them to the railroad corral when Billy Chamberlain appeared with Pink.

"Hear there's a bunch of wild horses to be picked up here!" shouted Billy.

"Poor old Red Wolf is out of luck," replied Hugh. "You fellows take these over to the railroad corral, and I'll bring in another bunch."

"How many did the plane get?" asked Pink, a huge figure on his big bay in the gathering dusk.

"Thirty, including those I had to shoot. An awful mess! Take the gray stallion on a lead-rope. He's a fiend."

"He's some horse! Looks like a standard-bred at first glance," said Billy. "I'll take charge of him myself."

Hugh grunted and trotted off on the still vastly excited Fossil. It was moonlight when he turned the last of the herd into the corral and, after a wash-up, went into the hotel for his supper. The meal had been cleared away long since, but Mrs. Morgan fluttered into the dining-room as soon as he appeared, and, to his great discomfort, insisted on waiting on him herself.

"I'll just bring it in from the kitchen," she said, in answer to his protests.

"Where did they put Fred and Red Wolf?" asked Hugh.

"They're both up-stairs, but I told 'em to put Red Wolf over in The Lariat later. You don't mind him; but I don't want a dirty Indian round me. Besides, I can't spare a room."

Hugh stared at his mother-in-law in angry wonderment. He had, he thought, sounded all her meannesses years ago. But here was a new one.

"You may be a first-class politician, Mrs. Morgan," he said stiffly, "but you are mighty limited in your sense of hospitality."

Mrs. Morgan bristled, but Pink came in before she could reply. Mrs. Ellis and one or two others of the committee-women followed him.

"Say, Hughie," exclaimed Pink; "these ladies act like they think you'd done something more than be an average good rider, this afternoon!"

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"Well, I haven't," said Hugh hastily, seeming not to hear the chorus of protests from Mrs. Ellis and her friends. "What did you do with the gray stallion, Pink? I couldn't find him in the railroad corral."

Pink grinned.

"Oh, I put him where he'd be safe. He's too good for an Indian. Guess I'll keep him to square old Red Wolf's board-bill."

"Your wife has already circumvented that by arranging to have him put in The Lariat to-night," returned Hugh grimly. "Don't try any of your funny work about the gray, Pink. I won't stand for it."

"Want him for yourself, Hughie?" Pink still was grinning, but his eyes were hard.

"That gray stallion is worth all the rest of the herd put together," insisted Hugh. "He belongs to Red Wolf."

"The hell he does! Red Wolf picked him up on range. Let's see him prove his right to him."

Hugh rose from his half-finished meal.

"Look here, Pink," he said, his low voice full of anger; "I've stood a good deal from you and yours, and right here is where we break. Old Red Wolf has been a friend of mine ever since I can remember. I've eaten and slept and worked with him, and he's a man, every inch of him. That's why I won't let you steal his horse and why I'm sore at your wife's throwing him out of your house. I'm not going to stand for it. I'm through with both of you in every way."

"My God, Hughie!" shouted Pink. "You wouldn't get so lathered up over a lousy Indian, would you? Why, you and the missis and me has weathered through fights over real things. That horse is too good for an Injun, and you know it."

Hugh stooped and took his hat from under his chair.

"I'm through," he repeated, as he straightened himself, "and Red Wolf shall keep that horse if I carry the matter to the Supreme Court."

His fine head was stiffly erect and his gray eyes were burning with a controlled fury that even the controversy over the proposed dam had not revealed there. Mrs. Ellis and her friends watched him without speaking, Mrs. Ellis particularly showing a watchful keenness that even the watchful Mrs. Morgan was too engrossed to observe. That astute politician exclaimed unbelievingly,

"Hughie, you aren't going to quit the fight for the Old Sioux Tract?"

"I am, as far as you're concerned," replied Hugh.

HE BOWED to the members of the committee and strode out of the room and up the stairs. He found Red Wolf in a little back room at the end of the upper hall. The old Indian was alone. He opened his eyes feebly as Hugh came in.

"Where's Eagle's Wing, old chap?" asked Hugh.

"Gone tell squaw."

"Then he won't be back until midnight," said Hugh. "Look here, Red Wolf; I want you to come over to The Lariat and let me take care of you."

Red Wolf sat up slowly.

"We go now," he said. "White squaw don't want me here."

Hugh nodded, and a few moments later the group of people gathered in the hotel office saw the old Sioux, carefully supported by Hugh's arm under his shoulders, slowly descend the stairs, shuffle across the hall and pass out of the door.

Hugh put his old friend to bed on Bookie's cot. And Red Wolf gave a gigantic sigh as Hugh tucked the blanket round him.

"Heap much long-time friends, huh, Hughie?" he grunted.

"Yes," agreed Hugh. "We'll show 'em; won't we, old-timer?"

Red Wolf nodded and closed his eyes in utter content.

Hugh renewed the fire in the heater, shaded the lamp from his patient's eyes and then went out to find the doctor and receive instructions as to the care of the wounded man. He was gone for an hour. Doc Olson was a busy man. When he returned to The Lariat, Mrs. Ellis was giving Red Wolf a drink of water. Hugh paused by the stove. Mrs. Ellis in a moment joined him and sank with a sigh into one of the chairs.

"You'll need some one to help you, I guess," she said. "He's going to be very sick before he's better. I declare I'm tired. I feel as if I'd had a heavy day. I don't know why."

"I'm sorry I had to start a row going before you all," said Hugh. "The truth is,

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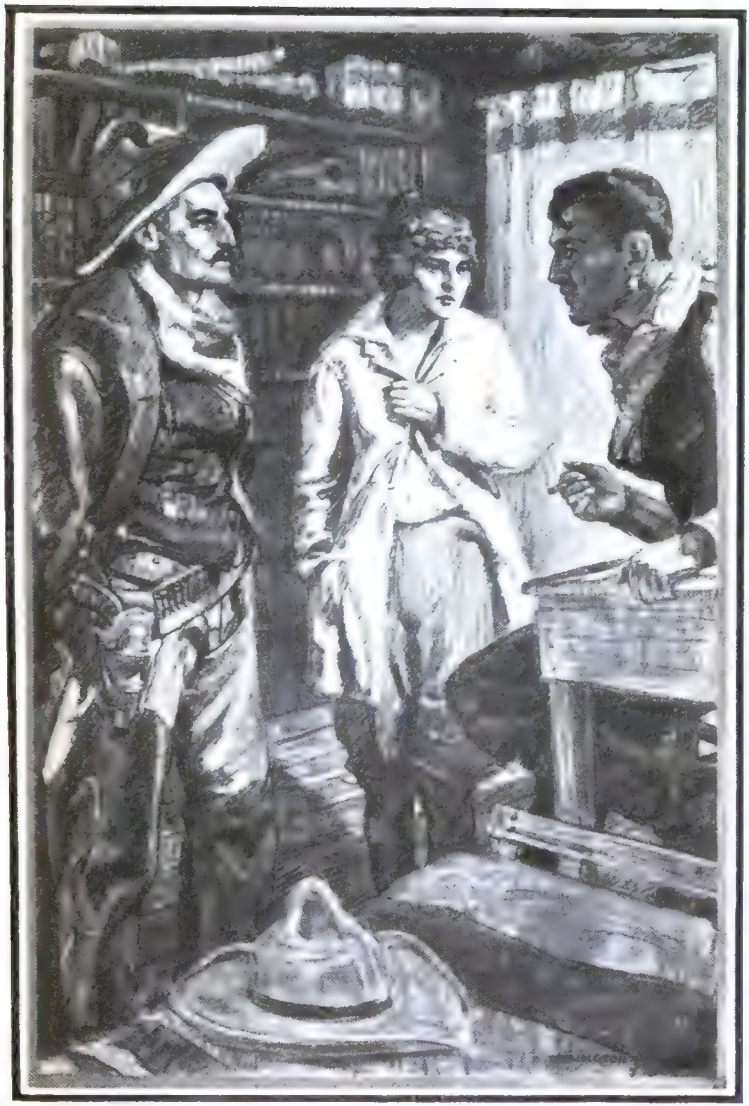

"Hughie," Johnny said, "you and I might as well know how we stand. To see you neglect a woman like Jessie makes me want to shoot you."

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I'm in a desperate frame of mind, and the Morgans happened to touch me on a spot that won't stand rough handling."

Mrs. Ellis nodded.

"I saw that. How are you feeling now? Too done up to talk?"

"I'm not done up at all. I've got to keep Red Wolf's wounds wet with this jar of solution Doc Olson gave me, and if you want to help wear away the hours for an ugly-tempered fossil-digger, here's your chance."

Mrs. Ellis laughed.

"Can't say it sounds attractive!" she exclaimed. "But I'll risk it. You light up your pipe and shove that box over for me to rest my feet on—I'm so fat I sit short—and we'll finish what we began this afternoon."

"But that is finished," protested Hugh, as he obeyed his guest's instructions.

"It might have sounded that way to an amateur," admitted Mrs. Ellis, "but when you've been in politics as long as I have, you'll realize that no statement, however final, ever really ends anything. However, have you, by any chance, formulated a campaign of your own?"

"Yes; I'm going after Governor Eli," replied Hugh.

"You can try him, of course, but I'll warn you that you'll have your trouble for your pains. He's absolutely committed to the proposition of squeezing every ounce of water-power out of every river, creek and spring in the state. He's probably already made his personal arrangements with the Eastern Electric Corporation. But you go on up to Cheyenne and have a conference with him. You'll have no difficulty in seeing him."

"I certainly shall try him out," stated Hugh, "and every member of the Public Utilities Commission, too. After that, I'll tour the state and speak in every town and every cross-trail. Then I'll go to Washington and camp down in the Department of the Interior."

Mrs. Ellis nodded.

"Not bad. But, of course, that's slow work, and, once the corporation gets its charter, it will start condemnatory proceedings on your land."

"That, too, is slow work," suggested Hugh.

"There might be ways of blocking them for a time, but the proceedings would grind along. So you have turned Mrs. Morgan down. Was Red Wolf the real reason?"

Hugh thought for a moment.

"Red Wolf was the final reason. I love that old Indian. He's all mixed up in my mind with my boyhood and my mother and Bookie and my work and—it's more than that." He tamped down the tobacco in his pipe and went on: "He's a fine man, and he's one of the few real friends I have. After all, you can't dissect friendship— Pink'll return that stallion—believe me, he will!"

"I believe you." Mrs. Ellis's voice was serious. "But, Mr. Stewart, if Red Wolf was the final reason, what were some that preceded it?"

Hugh hesitated.

"I wouldn't care to go into details about them. But, in general, Mrs. Morgan has fought my sticking to my work, and Pink is hand in glove with the Eastern Electric Corporation. And this afternoon my gorge rose in my throat at the idea of depending on a lot of women to help me out in what is a real man's fight. No, ma'am! I'm on my own now, thanks to Red Wolf."

"So the old Sioux made you do what you've never done for yourself," said Mrs. Ellis.

"I guess that's about it," agreed Hugh. "I love that old Indian."

HE ROSE and went back to wet the bandages on the quiet figure which looked so unfamiliar on his Uncle Bookie's cot. But he was inexplicably glad to have his old friend there. He returned slowly to his place by the fire.

"Mr. Stewart," began Mrs. Ellis, "I think I was wrong about you this morning. I didn't understand."

"Didn't understand what?" asked Hugh wonderingly.

"Well"—patiently—"perhaps I can make you understand by risking hurting you about your work. I still don't understand why paleontology should be at all important to Wyoming. I do appreciate, however, the kind of independence of mind a man must have to have suffered for his work as you've been made to suffer for yours."

"I'd rather you'd appreciate what paleontology can do for Wyoming," interposed Hugh grimly.

"Maybe I shall when you've finished educating all of us," said Mrs. Ellis seriously.

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"But the real point is that I was in the jitney on the bridge this afternoon, and I was in the Indian Massacre dining-room this evening."

"Poor old Fred did mix things up, didn't he?" said Hugh. "But the poor scout didn't mean a thing but to show off like a kid. He's all broken up. Thinks he's hurt the campaign. I was trying to cheer him up while I was waiting for the doctor. But he's given up being an ace. I'm certainly fond of that nervy little devil."

The smile that Mrs. Ellis gave Hugh was very motherly.

"All right, my dear," she said; "have it your own way."

Hugh gave her a puzzled glance, but before he could continue his insistence on Fred's charms, his *vis-à-vis* interrupted.

"I've gotten now all that Mrs. Morgan saw—and considerable more. After all, I am a ranchwoman, brought up among riders of the range. I know what goes to making that kind of a man. You are not at all the man with a single-track mind you think you are, Mr. Stewart. If you were given the chance to fight for the Children's Code, would you fight?"

Hugh refilled his pipe carefully.

"I was thinking about that code this afternoon while I was gathering in Red Wolf's horses. Curious, isn't it? It's building for the future while mine is digging up the past. Yet I'm hanged if I don't think it takes the same kind of pipe-dreaming minds to believe in either of them."

MRS. ELLIS considered this carefully and at length. Hugh was finding her capacity for deliberate thinking very enjoyable.

"I think you are right. But you haven't answered my question, Mr. Stewart."

"Why, yes," said Hugh. "I suppose that, if I was educated as to details and I saw that my fighting would put the code across, I'd jump in up to my neck—if it wouldn't interfere with my work."

Mrs. Ellis chuckled. Then she said seriously:

"I want to do justice to Mrs. Morgan in one thing. I'm persuaded that her idea is correct, that we must either wait for some years before bringing up the code again or we must elect a man to the governorship who will go in on some other platform but secretly pledged to force the Children's Code Bill through the legislature. Therefore, Mr. Stewart, I want to ask you to reconsider all your very vehement denials and let the women of this state make you its governor under these conditions."

Hugh was deeply puzzled.

"What in the world has made you change so?" he demanded.

"You'll probably never know, being you." Mrs. Ellis chuckled again. "But will you reconsider, Mr. Stewart? It seems to me—" She was interrupted by the violent thrusting-open of the door. Pink stamped in.

"Look here!" he shouted. "What have you done with that gray stallion?"

Hugh looked up casually.

"How should I know where the gray stallion is? I'm not a horse-thief."

"There ain't any saying what a fellow is that'll try to wreck the only real chance his home town has had to get on the map," retorted Pink, advancing belligerently toward the stove. His high-heeled boots were muddy and his face was scratched. "I've plowed through every corral and stable in this town. Where's that gray stallion?"

Hugh laughed.

"Look here, Pink; don't be a fool. If I have taken the horse, you don't suppose I'm going to confess to it, do you?"

"Why wouldn't it be Eagle's Wing who'd taken the stallion along?" asked Mrs. Ellis.

"Because I was with the stallion when Eagle's Wing rode out of town and for an hour after," growled Pink.

Again Hugh laughed.

"But, Pink, the gray belongs to Red Wolf and Eagle's Wing. I don't see where you come in."

"And I don't see where you come in!" snapped Pink. "I'll make you suffer for butting in on this, Hughie. I could stand your running-around with a woman that wasn't my daughter, and I could stand your playing peanut politics with my wife. Both of 'em is a good way to keep you busy while I bring in the bacon on the Old Sioux Tract. But if you think I'm a-going to stand you getting away with a horse I want, you've got another guess coming. Not for no stinking, lousy Injun like Red Wolf!"

Hugh rose slowly.

"That is about all, Pink! You'd better leave now, and don't come back again."

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Mrs. Ellis, the veteran witness of many a bitter fight in a country of fighting men, drew a quick breath as she watched Hugh. She knew instinctively that Pink was negligible. But Hugh, towering to his full height, was transformed from the melancholy, absent-minded scientist, the concentrated, swift-moving cow-man into an embodiment of controlled fury. In his muddling insolence, Pink had struck every raw spot in Hugh's sensitive mind. His eyes were black, his beautiful mouth compressed, his jaw a white, rigid line from ear to chin. It was not Hugh's anger that startled Mrs. Ellis. It was his control of it. He did not move for a full moment. Then he said in his low voice, as Pink did not offer to leave,

"I'm afraid you didn't understand me, Pink."

"Oh, I guess I understand enough to know my son-in-law is a——"

"You'd better go," said Hugh, without raising his voice.

Pink looked up into the younger man's eyes, and at what he saw there his face slowly whitened. He swallowed carefully and audibly twice, and stood silently gazing, obviously overwhelmed at a sudden vision of the ferocity he had evoked. Then, without further speech, he turned on one of his high heels and moved very hastily out of The Lariat. Hugh looked at Mrs. Ellis without seeing her and walked slowly back to Red Wolf's cot, where he wet the old chief's bandages. Mrs. Ellis waited until he returned to his chair opposite hers; then, with a sudden flush of tears to her keen eyes at what she read in the twisted smile on Hugh's lips, she rose to go.

"I'll not ask you for an answer to-night," she said. "Life—oh, life hangs so inscrutably and so fearfully on the unimportant thinks! It appalls me."

"Yes, it does," replied Hugh slowly. "I don't want the nomination, Mrs. Ellis."

"We'll not discuss that now. I, at least, am very tired. Good-night, my dear." The maternal note was again uppermost as she said this, turning toward the door.

HUGH'S night was a complex one, woven of anger, of passionate desire to turn to Miriam in his perplexity, of an almost uncontrollable yearning to dish everything and return to his old freedom on the plains. But, tenderly nursing Red Wolf as he fought his fight, the hours were full of Bookie and Bookie's last moments on that very cot. He would not, he could not break faith. He had not yet fathomed what the wise old man had meant when he had pleaded with him to give all. But, somehow, he would learn. Miriam would help him.

Eagle's Wing returned at dawn with his mother, but Hugh, entirely disillusioned as to the possibilities for cleanliness in a blanket Indian, dared not install the old woman as nurse. After she was satisfied that her man was well cared for, he sent her over to Fred's camp by the river, with the promise that she could see Red Wolf whenever she wished.

The old chief had hardly spoken during the night. But when his squaw had gone, he astonished Hugh by opening his eyes and saying to Eagle's Wing,

"You take the gray stallion?"

"No," said Eagle's Wing. "Pink got 'em in his stable."

"No has got," grunted Red Wolf. "He say Hughie got. You go tell Pink you got 'em."

"But no have got 'em," protested Eagle's Wing, rising, nevertheless, to obey.

"That's all right," agreed Red Wolf. "But you save Hughie trouble."

"No!" said Hugh decidedly. "Pink has done all the harm to me he can. But he will make you two a lot of trouble if he thinks you have that stallion. Let it alone, Red Wolf."

The old man sighed.

"You're a heap big fool, Hughie!" But his tone was that of acquiesence and affection, and shortly he was asleep.

Hugh's conference with Mrs. Ellis was but of few moments' duration. He was at breakfast in the tiny Chinese restaurant beyond the barber shop when the stout chairman bore down upon him. She took a chair opposite him, gamely ordered a cup of the vile coffee and said,

"How's Red Wolf?"

"Fair. He'll be crawling around in a week. The recuperative power of these Indians is marvelous."

"And what's the final answer?"

Lines of pain appeared in Hugh's face.

"Mrs. Ellis, I don't want to go into politics. I am a man with a single ambition, whose chosen vocation satisfies that ambition to its depths. I believe that I can save

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the Old Sioux Tract without going into politics, and I'm going to try. I like you, and I'd like to help you about the Children's Code. In fact, I will help you in every way I can—after I've done this other job. Won't that satisfy you?"

Mrs. Ellis sipped the mess of coffee Ah Lang placed before her almost to its dregs before she replied:

"And I like you, Mr. Stewart. I like you so much that I hate to see you break your heart against that gang at Cheyenne. But I believe it's best that you do so. And when they have finished with you, you send for me to come down to The Lariat to look at your spring line of books. And I'll come. In the mean time, I'm going to do one thing for you. I'm going to get my brother to hold up the granting of the charter for a month or so. He's on the commission. I can't get more than that out of him, though."

Hugh looked at Mrs. Ellis keenly. She must have been very beautiful as a girl. Her face now was a little aggressive, but it was still handsome. She wore her masses of white hair anyhow on the back of her head. She wore a very smart black toque at a very unbecoming angle, and the cut of her suit was all wrong for her stout figure. But Hugh did not know this. He liked her, and smiled as he said:

"I believe you've got a good many things up your sleeve. And I'm not at all sure but what you're as clever a politician as Mrs. Morgan."

"I'll never be as successful as she, because I'm not as unscrupulous as she is," replied Mrs. Ellis.

"Well," said Hugh, "I don't know anything about politics; but I'd say there wasn't any business in life from busting broncos to making governors where a perfectly lucid honesty wouldn't win in the end."

"We'll see if that's true." Mrs. Ellis returned his smile as she rose, offering him her hand. "I'm taking the nine-o'-clock limited. Don't rise. You aren't half through your breakfast. Good-by, my boy. I wish you were happier."

"I'm happier than I deserve to be at that. Good-by, Mrs. Ellis—and thank you."

He had a sudden sinking of his heart as she hurried past the restaurant window. He had made a friend, only to put her from him. Then he wondered, aimlessly enough, how his tall, gray-eyed mother would have looked with white hair, and finished his breakfast on that contemplation.

He wrote that day for a room in Cheyenne and made his plans for going over to the state capital the following week, when Red Wolf would be able to move to the camp by the river. He arranged for Fred Allward to keep The Lariat for him, Fred's broken arm being the only damage he had sustained beyond a grievously hurt pride which vented itself in utter bitterness toward Mrs. Morgan. Mrs. Morgan herself ceased all attempt at communication with Hugh, and the wall between The Lariat and the Indian Massacre was apparently impassable, for even Jessie did not attempt to scale it.

No trace was found of the gray stallion, though for a week Pink scoured the town. Curiously enough to the Eastern mind, but not the Western, the episode of the horse served to rouse to active dislike what had before been only amused hostility. A plainsman, even of the second or third generation, has a peculiar attitude toward horse-flesh. He is, on the average, very hard on horses, is often brutal and indifferent to them. He is not a lover of horses. But he is a user of them. They are a prime necessity to him, and he cannot and will not tolerate liberties with his mounts. A horse-thief is low beyond estimate. A man with notches on his gun is more than apt to be a hero.

Somehow, as Pink stormed through Fort Sioux, the impression grew that Hugh had taken the gray stallion out of Pink's stable for Red Wolf. It did not in the least matter about Pink's claim to ownership. The horse was one an Indian had lost after roping it on free range. An Indian had no rights in Fort Sioux. And, although Hugh was not to know it until after his return from Cheyenne, Pink's silly animosity gave birth to the nickname that, at first with opprobrium, later with affectionate humor, was to cling to him the rest of his life.

HUGH reached Cheyenne in a snow-flurry—dry, hard pellets of snow, a high wind, dust, a clatter of cavalry hard a-gallop up the smartly paved street, a sprinkling of derby hats and top-coats. Cheyenne was not the frontier town it had

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been ten years before thought Hugh as he prepared to storm the governor's fortress. Not a difficult matter at all. Governor Eli knew his Wyoming, and he was as easy to see in the Capitol in Cheyenne as he was on his huge ranch in the Wind River country. Within two hours after Hugh had left the local which brought him up from Fort Sioux, he was sitting in the outer office of the governor's suite. He was not kept waiting.

THE governor was thin and short, with an aquiline, smooth-shaven face, and keen black eyes set a trifle too close together. He had a pleasant smile that disclosed even teeth discolored by tobacco. He shook hands with Hugh heartily.

"From Fort Sioux, eh, Mr. Stewart? You're old Bookie Smith's nephew, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am, Governor. Did you know my uncle?"

"Oh, for many years! A great character. Too bad we could never get him into politics. What is your line, Mr. Stewart?"

"They call me a bone-digger down in my country, sir. I'm a hunter of fossils."

"Oh, fossils, eh? Any money in it?"

"A scant living."

"I suppose you were your uncle's heir, though." The governor nodded. Then, at a sudden pricking of memory, he laughed. "Ah, I have you placed now, Stewart. Bookie's will." He pressed a button and a secretary appeared. "Anderson, bring me in the clipping containing Bookie Smith's will. You recall that I made a dinner-speech for the Elks about it?"

The secretary nodded, and Governor Eli turned back to Hugh.

"The will was exactly like Bookie. He didn't like to have a fossil-digging nephew, eh?"

"I'm afraid I was a great disappointment to the dear old man," said Hugh slowly. "I was sorry; but, after all, there are things a man must decide for himself."

"Yes, there are," agreed the governor, with ready understanding. "Here is the will." He glanced at it. "That last clause is what impressed me. Made a speech with that as a text. Wanted the Elks to back up a state traveling library." He paused reminiscently, then said abruptly, "And what can I do for you, Mr. Stewart?"

"Down in our country, Governor," began Hugh slowly, "there's ten thousand acres of land on the Roaring Chief known as the 'Old Sioux Tract.' As you know, Uncle Bookie left it to me, with certain stipulations. He knew how much I wanted it, because even before his death I had good reason to believe it would prove to be one of the greatest fossil-fields in the world. I suppose"—tentatively—"that a great fossilfield means very little to you, Governor?"

Governor Eli's smile was apologetic.

"It doesn't exactly excite my avarice, Stewart. But I'm open-minded. Go ahead."

Hugh glanced from the governor to the window, past which the snow twisted in great gray spirals, and plunged into the story now so painfully familiar to him. Governor Eli, obviously at first only politely interested, gradually focused his wandering gaze on Hugh's face and watched its play of expression with concentrated attention. When the tale was finished, he lit the cigar that had grown cold between his lips.

"So they are trying to get their charter now. What have you done to block them, Mr. Stewart?"

Hugh had made no mention of Mrs. Morgan or of Mrs. Ellis.

"I have done nothing that amounts to anything, Governor, except, now, to come to you."

The governor nodded.

"Have you ever thought of going into public life, Stewart—speaking and that kind of thing, you know?"

"Yes; I've thought of it—only to dislike the idea more every time I think of it."

"And right, too, old man! It's a dog's life. God knows I've never stopped regretting the day I let myself be dragged off my ranch into the legislature. Don't you ever let it be done to you. Now then, we must see what we can do to save your fossils. Suppose you let me have a few days to turn round in. Where can we reach you? The Plains Hotel? Good! Don't stray too far from the telephone."

Hugh rose, a pleasant feeling of accomplishment lifting the look of melancholy from lip and eye. He made his departure high with hope. What a fool he had been to delay coming to headquarters so long! He smiled contemptously at his former petticoat-ridden self, and strode down the

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wind-scourged streets at sudden peace with the world.

BUT there followed several days, during which Hugh gradually lost the utter confidence in Governor Eli's sympathy with which he had left the conference. When five days had passed he returned to the Capitol. The governor was not in. He went back to the hotel and wrote the governor a letter, to which he received a courteous reply. Governor Eli had the matter in hand and would tell Mr. Stewart of the results as soon as they were obtained.

Hugh threw the letter in the waste-paper basket and began to walk the floor. An hour of this; then he found a list of the members of the Public Utilities Commission and began what was probably the bitterest weeks of all his political life. He found it so exceedingly difficult to procure an interview with the members of the commission that he was not long in realizing that they knew his name and errand and did not wish to see him. But a man who could work for three months with awl and whisk-broom to disinter the bones of an eighty-foot dinosaur was not to give up lightly the mere matter of getting an interview with a reluctant commissioner. He looked up a former college-mate, one of the editors of a local newspaper, and from him received a thorough though rapid education as to the particular kinds of politics that caused one to see the commission as through a glass darkly. He was also enlightened in detail as to Governor Eli's decidedly confusing attitude toward the magnificent natural resources of the richly endowed state of Wyoming.

The newspaper man talked much to Hugh about the necessity for bringing pressure to bear on the governor and on the commission.

"What kind of pressure?" demanded Hugh belligerently.

"Something of the nature of a swap, with a kick concealed in the offer," replied his friend. "But, honestly, Hugh, you are wasting your time. It's too late for you to beat out a big concern like the Eastern Electric Corporation. You go find you another fossil-field, old man. Though it's a darned shame for you to waste yourself digging up bones."

Hugh grunted and left the newspaper office with a set jaw. And by dint of persistent telephoning and writing, he finally interviewed each member of the commission. They were politely indifferent to his statement and his plea. John Houghton, Mrs. Ellis's brother, alone did more than agree to take the matter under consideration. He suggested that after Christmas Hugh appear before a session of the commission. He did not mention his sister, nor did Hugh.

Hugh went from Houghton's office to the governor's. There he sat for two days. It was probable that something menacing behind his melancholy gaze finally pierced the highly weather-proofed skin of Anderson, the governor's secretary, or this waiting-game would have brought no results. The governor and his secretary were accustomed to it. But late in the afternoon of the second day, after a colloquy with his chief, Anderson peremptorily bade Hugh come into the inner room.

The governor's pleasant smile was lacking.

"I'm sorry you saw fit, Mr. Stewart, to see the members of the commission. I thought you had placed yourself in my hands."

"Do you think I was wise to do so, sir?" asked Hugh. The governor's eyebrows went up. Hugh went on, his low voice never rising but his eyes growing darker as he progressed. "I am not a politician, Governor Eli, so it has taken me nearly a month to learn what any crossroads boss evidently knows in Wyoming—that the natural resources of this state are threatened by a ring of men who are as lawless as the old Jimmy Duncan gang my uncle drove out of the Sioux Tract."

"Do you wish to name any names?" demanded the governor sharply.

"I don't mind," answered Hugh. He pulled a list of the names of the Public Utilities Commission from his pocket and read it through. "And of course, you know, Governor Eli," he added, "that your own name is always mentioned as the leader of the gang."

The older man pulled himself slowly to his feet. He leaned far over his desk, his face white with anger.

'Young man," he said, "you've got more courage than you have sense. My advice to you is to go back to Fort Sioux—and to go back quick."

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"And my advice to you," returned Hugh steadily, "is to help me save the tract."

"You nameless fool!" exclaimed the governor contemptuously. "I'd lose my temper if I weren't sorry to see a man obviously meant for better things ruining himself for a bone quarry. I can do nothing for you."

Hugh, who had been standing throughout the interview, looked slowly round the room with its handsome appointments, and thought, with a sudden pang of regret and homesickness, of The Lariat and its shelf-lined walls. Then he looked the governor over as impersonally as though he were a newly disclosed dinosaur.

"Governor," he said, "if you'd been doing my kind of work instead of yours, you'd have learned that it's the casual happenings of life of which time is most apt to make the imperishable record. To speak in legend, we have no picture of the flaming sword that closed the Garden of Eden to us forever. But the cast of a worm that crawled over the path down which Adam and Eve fled before the sword is preserved to us, perfect in every detail. Your treatment of me is, of course, only one of the trivial details of your daily official life. Yet I assure you that it would be quite like one of time's curious ineptitudes to cause this particular detail to be preserved in stone and to permit some of the really big achievements of your career to be lost forever."

"What are you doing—threatening me?" sneered Governor Eli.

"Threatening you? No!" replied Hugh. His smile was twisted. "Perhaps I'm merely trying to make you see life as I see it—as a span so appallingly short that it staggers me to think of the—the ineptitudes, if you will—with which we deliberately crowd our days." He suddenly twisted his long brown hands together and added, as if he were alone, "Life, so unimportant and of such staggering moment to each of us!"

Governor Eli scowled. Hugh caught the scowl, and again his gray eyes darkened.

'So you will not help me, Governor Eli?"

The governor pressed the desk-button furiously. To the secretary, who appeared immediately, he said,

"Mr. Stewart has finished this and any other interview with me."

"Well," sighed Hugh, "it's too bad." And he followed Anderson from the room.

There seemed for the time nothing further to be done. He could not appear before the commission until after the Christmas holidays, and he knew that the granting of the charter to the Eastern Electric Corporation would be held up until after that hearing, thanks to Mrs. Ellis. And so, after a solitary Thanksgiving dinner in the hotel, Hugh returned to The Lariat.

FRED ALLWARD welcomed him back. The little man had recovered in good shape from his accident, but was decidedly hostile to the idea of ever going within hailing-distance of an air-plane again.

"But what am I going to do with that wreck you wished on me, Fred?" asked Hugh.

"Oh, Martin's got it in running-shape again," said Fred. "I guess I can sell it for you. I can sell most anything, by heck! I sold that set of the 'Elsie' books to a cowman from the Jackson Hole country. I told him all the public libraries had suppressed 'em, and he couldn't buy 'em fast enough. What's the news up at Cheyenne, Hughie?"

Hugh recounted his experiences, and Fred swallowed tobacco juice and listened with indignant but absorbed interest.

"I'm going up there in January when you go," he said, when Hugh had finished. "Some of them fellows will be shooting you."

"You take care of The Lariat, Fred. You're a better salesman than either Uncle Bookie or I."

Fred nodded complacently.

'Beats hell—don't it?"

"How are things at the Indian Massacre?" asked Hugh.

"Ain't been near 'em. But, Hughie, Pink's built up a lot of mean feeling in town about you. Of course, the fact that you're keeping money away from the town is at the bottom of it."

'When I came out of the station to-day," said Hugh, "Billy Chamberlain's boy and some others I didn't know yelled: 'Gray Stallion! Gray Stallion!' at me. Pink hasn't been keeping that fool thing going, has he? The man is crazy."

"Crazy or not," returned Fred, "he's p'ison mad. He sees you spoiling his one

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big chance, and he's going to load you with all the mud you can carry."

Hughie grunted enigmatically, then asked, "Have you seen Jessie?"

"Yes; she's asked me on the street a couple of times when you were coming back. She's still up at the ranch, bookkeeping and such, she said. She didn't tell me so, but Principal Jones says she has broke with her father— Wait a minute! Jones is just crossing the street. Seems like he's the only friend but me and Red Wolf you got in Fort Sioux."

PRINCIPAL JONES came in with a broad smile.

"Well, Hughie! Glad to see you back. How are things in Cheyenne?"

Hugh shook hands and returned the smile.

"Principal, I learned more about politics on this trip than in all my life before."

The old schoolmaster shook his head.

"I was afraid of that. Did you run afoul of Grafton?"

"No; I didn't see him. But I heard that he'd gone back to Chicago. Look here, Principal; aren't you going to hurt your standing in Fort Sioux by coming in here?"

The old man laughed.

"Pshaw, Hughie! Don't you know that a schoolmaster hasn't either standing or sex? He's like a preacher—sort of a tolerated nuisance. Jokes aside, I'd like to help you, Hughie, if you can tell me how."

"I'll certainly tell you how as soon as I learn a little more of the ropes," returned Hugh gratefully. "Sit down, won't you?"

"Say, Principal," said Fred, noisily replenishing the heater; "you tell Hughie about that row you heard Jessie had with Pink. I was just starting on it myself when you come in."

The schoolmaster looked at Hugh questioningly. Every one, of course, knew that Jessie and Hugh were living separate lives, yet even this man, who had spanked the geologist many times, hesitated.

"Go on! Go on!" urged Fred. "Don't pay no attention to Hughie. I want him to know it."

'Well," said Principal Jones, "Jessie came over to the schoolhouse one day to see me about their having a little school up on the ranch. What with the little Indians and the children's help, they've got a right to one. And while she was talking to me about this, Pink comes stamping in. 'Jess,' he roars, 'how come that you never come to the hotel to see your mother and me any more?'

" 'I don't like what you've been doing to Hughie,' says Jessie.

" 'And I don't like what Hughie's done to you!' roars Pink. 'Ain't you got any pride?'

" 'I've got plenty,' replies Jessie; 'but what's between Hughie and me is between us and nobody else.' She was perfectly cool, you understand, while Pink, as usual, was booming like a bull.

" 'Between you and him and that Miriam Page, you mean,' he comes back. 'Well, if you ain't got no sense of shame, I have! In the good old days I'd have shot him. I may do it yet. But I've got one satisfaction: I've put a brand into him he'll never lose. He'll be marked as the "Gray Stallion" till he dies.'

"Jessie got up slowly, but you could see that she was angry enough to knock him down. I think she could have, too. She is six inches taller than he is, and hard-muscled as a range-rider. But she held herself in, and she says, slow—you know how lazy her voice is sometimes:

" 'Dad, that's the most low-down thing I've ever known you to do, and you've done many of them. And if you don't go to work at once to undo the harm you've done to him by it, I swear you and I break now for good and all.'

"Pink, of course, went crazy for a minute. It was all bluster, but he didn't give in, and it wound up by her ordering him out of my office as cool as if he was the hired help. He went, too, and she turned round and began discussing the school again with me. Jessie has changed and grown. Life has strange ways of forcing us to develop our better selves. I didn't say anything about the interview except, as Jessie was going, to suggest that if she'd had the loyalty to you in years gone by that she had now, things might have been different. She gave me a quick little nod. That, of course, isn't saying, Hughie, that I approve of your relations with Miriam Page, because I don't. But I understand it."

Fred suddenly flared up.

"Don't you kick at Hughie about that!

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You ain't lived with him as I have, and seen Jessie make fun of him and his work in front of people and jab at him about not being a man. She done it for years till she got him so he had his back up all the time. He wouldn't have been half so single-scented after fossils if she hadn't been so plumb ornery about it. I think he's a damn fool about Miriam Page; but all the same——"

"Hold on, Fred," said Hugh quietly. "After all, my private life is private."

"Nobody's life is private!" exclaimed the schoolmaster. "You, of all people in Fort Sioux, Hughie, never have had any private life, and never can have."

"I don't see why not!" ejaculated Hugh irritably.

"It's plain enough. You've dragged the dramatic in your wake ever since you were a child. You can't help it. Well, I just dropped in on my way to get a hair-cut. Are you going back to Cheyenne soon?"

"After Christmas. I don't say much, Principal, but I'm a whole lot bucked up to know you're with me."

The old man nodded.

"Now I'll go over and quarrel with Billy Chamberlain about you."

THE month dragged. Hugh received long letters from Miriam, and wrote even longer ones in return. Miriam made no attempt to direct Hugh's effort to save his fossil-field. But she urged him on to the fight by a sympathy that intoxicated him as regularly as her letters came. But in spite of the letters, the days in The Lariat were long. The big snows that arrived with December prevented any one from the outlying ranches from visiting Fort Sioux, and except for Principal Jones and Red Wolf, The Lariat was unpatronized. The old Indian's effort to cheer Hugh up were unceasing. Not a week passed that he did not come prowling into the shop with some curious memento of the tribe and carry on a long, haggling barter for a book. The trading was, to say the least, unique, and was the only bright spot in the long month. Hugh always carried on the negotiations himself, for the old Sioux openly scorned doing business with Fred. They traded a pair of polished buffalo horns for a copy of Artemus Ward. A beaded *kinne-kinick* bag for a cheap and very gaudily bound reproduction of Hogarth's "Rake's Progress." A buckskin belt and a dilapidated war-bonnnet for a second-hand set entitled: "Pictorial History of the Civil War." The final triumph for both sides, however, was the trading of a necklace made up of teeth—bear teeth, buffalo teeth, snake fangs, the teeth of Red Wolf's father and of his first wife and of several of his own, all strung on a deer sinew as pliable as silk—for a copy of "Queen Victoria." The old chief fell violently in love with a picture of the queen at her stoutest, and would have bartered his teepee containing his present squaw if it had been necessary to close the bargain.

The day after Christmas Hugh returned to Cheyenne, and within two days' time he had procured an appointment to present his case before the commission. His was the first business brought up when the morning session was called. John Houghton introduced Hugh to the members, and he was invited to join the group round the mahogany table.

This was quite a different matter from telling his tale to the barber-shop group or to Miriam or to the Conservation and Children's Code Committees. These were hard-headed, experienced politicians, all of whom had expressed an entire impatience with Hugh's plea. He had thought constantly in the past month of what he could say that might reach them. He knew that the scientific plea would not touch them. He knew that there could be no appeal to their state pride. Their record precluded the possibility of their having any. He believed that there was small chance of what Mrs. Morgan had called his "personality" beguiling them. And he sat forward in the chair they had given him at the table and opened his mouth to speak without any real idea of what he would say.

And he began, to his own astonishment, to talk of his Uncle Bookie. Every man at the table had known the former owner of The Lariat. Old Charlie Whitom, the chairman, had ridden herd for Bookie before the old ranch had been turned over to dudes. John Houghton had purchased a brood-mare, three cows and a bull from Bookie thirty years before, and had thus gotten a start in life. Fred had told this to Hugh in the month just passed. And there was not a man among them who had not

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visited the wise old man who had dreamed dreams in The Lariat.

Hugh told them about his discovery of the cave and of Bookie's trip to his Christmas camp. With the accuracy of memory that was partly born in him and was partly the result of his scientific training, he repeated the long conversation between himself and Bookie, appalled as he did so by the sudden revelation to himself of his own egoism. When he told of his findings in the cave and of Jimmy Duncan's skeleton, there was a sudden movement and murmur from his hearers. Hugh paused. He was not sure how far to go.

"What did you do with him?" demanded Whitom. "I knew that fellow."

With sudden inspiration, Hugh decided to have no reticences.

"What I say will be treated as entirely confidential and not even be inscribed at the minutes?" he asked.

Old Whitom turned to the young woman who was busily inscribing pothooks in a note-book.

"Miss Dick, skeedaddle!" he said shortly.

Miss Dick left the room,

"Now, Stewart, shoot—and shoot straight," said the chairman. "We'll have some straight man's talk at this session. If any of you old-timers want to get out, get out now, because I don't opine I want to be interrupted while I'm digging up these three several kinds of old bones."

A grin went round the table, but nobody moved except to relight cigars.

"I'll tell you what I did with Jimmy Duncan's bones," said Hugh slowly. "But, first, I'll explain what Uncle Bookie said to me when I told him that the old cattle-runner was below. He said, 'Hughie, I left Jimmy Duncan down there twenty three years ago this Christmas.' "

"Hah!" ejaculated old Whitom. "Go on, Stewart."

"I asked, 'Did you put a notch on your gun, Uncle Bookie?' "

" 'You can bet I did, Hughie—a deep one!'

" 'Why, Uncle Bookie?'

" 'Because he was a skunk.'

" 'Will you tell me about it, Uncle Bookie?' I asked.

"He nodded. 'I'll try. Hughie,' he said. 'I loved your mother from the time she came out here with your poor dad——' "

Hugh went on in his gentle way to tell of Bookie's tragic love-story. Not an eye moved from his face as he continued:

"And so, when I returned to the cave the next day, I knew what Jimmy Duncan had done. I built a big fire in the remains of the old fireplace, and I kicked his bones into the flames. And I threw the ashes out into the Roaring Chief, and I cursed him as I threw them."

THERE was silence, during which not a man present failed to see the look of anger, entirely controlled, that had so impressed Mrs. Ellis.

"I am telling you all this," Hugh finally went on, "because I want you to feel that the Old Sioux Tract and Uncle Bookie are inseparably connected in my mind."

"And yet," said John Houghton, "you want to keep that same tract to dig the fossils out of what your uncle was so sore about."

A quick nod went round the table, in which Hugh soberly joined.

"One point at a time, gentlemen. Yes; I was a keen disappointment to Uncle Bookie." Hugh looked miserably out the window, flecked across by a rattling cotton-wood tree. "I would have changed it if I could. But a cow-pony with all the good will in the world can't make himself into a race-horse, and if he's a horse with sense, he won't try. Uncle Bookie felt that himself. Toward the last he didn't talk so much to me about my work as he did about my—well, I suppose one might say, my character. He had more real, disinterested fondness for Wyoming than any native son I ever met. I think his biggest disappointment in me was that I didn't show the same kind of fondness."

Hugh paused. It was extraordinarily painful, this laying his soul bare before these hard-faced men. But he was impelled to go on.

"It was a fondness that none of you and certainly not I have ever felt. It was a feeling so strong that what embittered his death-bed was the realization that he had not done his limit for Wyoming. I don't blame him myself for not doing more. He was a clean-handed man. He stood for civic decency, and enforced it at the gun-point if necessary. He knew that he couldn't mix in state politics without

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dirtying his hands. He did all he could for Wyoming up to that point."

Again Hugh stopped while he drew on the deeps within. And still his auditors, angered though they may have been, made no attempt to interrupt Hugh's low-voiced monologue.

"I am saying to you now"—suddenly lifting his head and speaking directly at Whitom, his beautiful, ardent mouth twisted half tragically—"that not until I repeated our conversation to you this morning have I realized what my self- and work-absorption must have meant to Uncle Bookie. And yet observe that, after all, knowing that I would use it as a world fossil-field, he did put it within my power to control the Old Sioux Tract. This tract that for nearly a quarter of a century had had such a poignant significance to him, that was bound up with his early fight to make Wyoming a law-abiding state, with the killing that must have been a terrible memory to him and, most of all, with the deep hurt of having it spurned by the woman he loved, who preferred to die in poverty and dependence rather than take from him the gift won by him at such soul-cost. This is the tract that he turned over to me. I believe that I can turn it to such noble usage that it will satisfy all Uncle Bookie's hurts—as to Duncan, as to my mother, as to me. Force the Eastern Electric Corporation to build its dam elsewhere, gentlemen. Let me make a monument to Uncle Bookie."

Old Whitom heaved a great sigh.

"Those were the days! Men was men in those days. So that's what became of Jimmy Duncan. Huh!"

John Houghton spoke.

"Grafton, the Eastern Corporation's man, says the only other feasible point to build the dam is fifteen miles on up the Roaring Chief. He says what with the frightful difficulty that would be added in transportation-costs—it's a God-awful spot to reach from the railroad—and in the doubling of the size of the dam as would have to be done at that point, it would more than double the cost of the project, and it's not to be thought of. The corporation has reached its limit in costs with the dam at Thumb Butte."

Whitom scratched a scraggly chin with a paper-knife.

"Why ain't it monument enough to Bookie to let the Old Sioux Tract contribute to the producing of water-power for his section of Wyoming?" he asked.

Hugh felt a sudden sense of overpowering weariness. He looked at the chairman with such a combination of anger and disgust in eye and lip that the old man turned hastily to the other members of the commission.

"Any other of you folks got anything to say?"

THEY had, and they said it at considerable length. Hugh made no attempt to follow the details of their arguments. He was convinced that they had been bought and paid for. When each member had said his say, the chairman turned to Hugh.

"Sorry, Stewart. You've given us a pretty good idea of how you feel and how old Bookie felt. But to go up against this Eastern Electric Corporation so it would give up building the Fort Sioux dam would be about the most unpopular thing this commission could do in this state."

"What's that got to do with it?" demanded Hugh. Then he bit his lip. Not for one moment did he purpose losing his self-control. "Is this answer final?" he asked quietly.

Whitom looked round the table.

"I guess it is, son. As far as I'm concerned, I'm sorry it has to be so. I was fond of Bookie and, as near as I can judge, you are extra-prime quality yourself—in spite of your job. But business and politics can't mix with science."

Hugh rose slowly.

"I think I ought to warn you," he said, "that this is only the beginning of my fight. Unless I am egregiously mistaken, your decision has started a force going that probably will turn the present state administration out of doors."

An amused smile should have crossed each face, but, curiously enough, it did not. There was a controlled power in Hugh's face that caused Whitom to say,

"Gentlemen, not because we are scared of the threat, but because we'd like to give Bookie's nephew a sporting-chance, let's hold up delivering that charter till Easter."

A nod went round the table. Whitom turned to Hugh and said, with a show of courtesy strange to him,

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"That's the best we can do for you, Mr. Stewart."

Hugh bowed and left the room.

HE RETURNED to Fort Sioux that night. He was bitterly disappointed, but not discouraged. All the next day and until well into the following night he contemplated what he knew to be the most drastic decision of his life. With a new clarity of vision gained by his experiences at the capital, he faced facts about himself that he never before had faced. Pacing the floor of the room lined with the volumes old Bookie had loved so well, the room where less than a year before he had decided to make what he believed to be the supreme sacrifice of his life, he found life demanding of him a sacrifice infinitely greater, infinitely more difficult. He went to bed deeply absorbed in the contemplation of this sacrifice, and woke early to lie watching Fred putter at the starting of the heater-fire and to listen to the broken ice grind and crash in the swift-moving river, with a sense of loss and of destiny upon him difficult to adjust to each other.

The morning was about half spent when Red Wolf came in. He only grunted when Hugh asked him, smiling, what the trade was to be that day, and stood for a long time with his back to the heater, glowering at Hugh with a face quite expressionless except for the burning eyes.

"What's eating you, Red Wolf?" Fred finally demanded.

The Indian turned to Hugh.

"Winter it not last long, this year," he said. "Not much snow."

"There's been an unusual amount of snow up on the plains, Red Wolf," protested Hugh.

"Yes; but not cold. Soon go. And heap little snow down here. Ice usually go out of river in March. Look! Ice going out of river now."

"What about it, Red Wolf?" Hugh eyed his old friend keenly, realizing that in his own way and his own time the Indian would tell him something he considered important.

"Most times, Fort Sioux folks they no try go up river cañon in winter. Too hard work. You remember—they say you heap fool last year—maybe get killed working in cave in winter?"

"I remember," said Hugh. "Keep out of it for a minute, Fred"—as the little man muttered impatiently.

"But this year," Red Wolf went on imperturbably, "folks they go up river; they find no snow on your trail to cave; they go in cave."

"What did they do there?" exclaimed Hugh.

"Injun can't go in cave. You know that, Hughie. But I see big door broke out from this side of river when I ride down this morning."

Hugh, his cheeks flushing, put a restraining hand on Fred's shoulder.

"What else did you see, Red Wolf?"

"Broken boxes on trail."

"God! That's too much!" cried Hugh. "Come on, Red Wolf; I'm going up there. Fred, you watch the store."

"Who helped save that critter? Was it Red Wolf?" shouted Fred. "Let him mind shop!"

A look of pleased surprise came to Red Wolf's eyes.

"I sell 'em books," he said. "You take Fred. He go in cave with you."

Hugh smiled one-sidedly, nodded, strapped on his gun and pulled on his mackinaw.

"Now, Red Wolf," said Fred impressively, "don't sell anything. Just take orders for 'em. You don't sabe how to sell books. See? You just let folks tell you what they want. And I'll fix 'em up when I get back."

"Fred, you go heap to hell," grunted the Indian, removing his mackinaw and walking behind the counter to stand leaning against the bookcases in close imitation of Hugh's favorite attitude.

Fred followed Hugh hastily to the corral.

There was too much ice in the river to risk a boat. The two men decided to use the horses along the river-edge as far as they could go, and then to crawl along the face of the cañon until they reached the trail to the cave. They saddled quickly and silently trotted out of town to the bridge.

It was there that they met Jessie. She pulled up Magpie.

"Hello, Hughie! What luck did you have in Cheyenne?"

"None at all. And it looks as if ill luck were pursuing me here, too."

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"What's happened, Hughie?"

"Red Wolf reports that some one has broken into the cave where I'd left the triceratops, and from what he says I think they've wantonly destroyed the specimen. We're going up there."

Hugh spurred Fossil and rode off abruptly A small boy standing on the bridge, watching the chaos of ice in the river, waited until Hugh had crossed, then put his hands to his mouth and shouted lustily:

"Gray Stallion! Oh, Gray Stallion!"

Hugh looked back and saw Jessie jump from her horse and box the youngster's ears. Fred laughed, and Hugh thought, "I wonder what Miriam would do about that particular deviltry of Pink's." Then he gave his mind to the anxiety at hand.

They were able to work their horses within a possible two miles of the trail. When, however, the cañon wall crowded the river too closely for safe riding, they hobbled their mounts and began the difficult climb along the wall. It was mid-afternoon when they made the trail and after a few moment's rest began the upward climb. Half-way up they came upon a broken box from which protruded a piece of ribbone, hacked and mangled beyond repair. After a hasty examination they continued the climb, to be brought to pause again and again by portions of the specimen wantonly injured and tumbled upon the path.

NEITHER man spoke until the ledge was reached. The door had been chopped to pieces, but the crude door-frame was intact, and on one side of it was scrawled with charcoal: "For the Gray Stallion."

Fred uttered an oath. But still Hugh did not speak. He lit a candle and led the way within the cave. Here the destruction was complete. The floor was littered with broken and mingled bones of the ancient Indian warriors and of the triceratops. The fireplace and the altar had been eradicated. Hugh, holding the candle at arm's length above his head, strode up and down the cave, his face set, his jaw white. Fred followed at his heels, for once not daring to speak.

At length Hugh was driven by very weariness to pause. He leaned against the door frame and looked at Fred.

"Who could have done it? Why did they do it? What have I done to deserve it?"

"Done! Done! Why, you've done what a guy like Pink or Billy Chamberlain can't excuse you for. You've used your brains to make yourself too smart for them to keep up with. I'll get 'em for this! God! You'll see. I'll get 'em!"

"There's no proof they did it," said Hugh. "We won't get anywhere by going crazy. Let's gather up the wood and make a fire where the chimney was and go over this thing carefully. There must be some kind of clue to pick up. Calm down, Fred. The men that did this are going to suffer, but we're not going to make any bad breaks."

They built a fire, and by its light and that of the candles searched diligently for clues to the identity of the miscreants. There were myriad footprints in the sand and dust. But greater skill than that possessed by Hugh or Fred was required to discover their significance. After a prolonged effort Hugh sat down by the fire on a broken box.

"Fred," he said, "I'm hard hit by this."

"Don't I know that?" raved Fred. "Oh, let me get my hands on 'em! Let me!"

"It's more than that sort of thing will satisfy," muttered Hugh, leaning his head wearily on his hand. "Fred"—abruptly—"do me one more favor. Go on back to The Lariat and leave me here for the night."

"What's the idea?" demanded Fred in astonishment.

"I want to be alone," replied Hugh. "Fred, old man, this thing is a sort of last straw with me. I'm—I'm hard hit. And I want to be alone to get on top of myself again."

"But you haven't got anything to eat."

"I don't want anything. I'll come down in the morning."

Fred scratched his chin and sighed.

"Well, you're the boss. I'll take the horses along and be back up to meet you in the morning."

Hugh nodded, and Fred, without further comment or protest, hurried from the cave to take advantage of the remainder of the daylight in the perilous passage along the river's edge.

Hugh sat before the fire, head on hands. It did not seem to him that he could endure the thought of the loss of the marvelous specimen. And he dared not return to Fort Sioux until he had faced this new trouble and had got himself well in hand.

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It seemed to him a very long time before Jessie, looking up into his face, said: "Hughie, I suppose that selfishness wrecks more lives than anything else in the world. My own has wrecked me."

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Yet for a long time he could only sit in impotent wrath over the senseless destruction of a thing so invaluable. All the outraged scientist was uppermost in him now. He had no thought of Miriam, of the Old Sioux Tract or of the problem he had been facing the night before.

Darkness had fallen completely when, above the crackling of the fire, he caught the sound of footsteps without. He listened intently, his hand slipping automatically to his hip. It would have gone ill with Pink had he appeared at that moment in the cave-opening. But it was not Pink. It was his daughter Jessie. She paused in the doorway, breathing rapidly, her face flushed, her eyes heavily shadowed in the flickering light. After a moment she discerned Hugh and moved forward.

"I was coming up to see what the trouble was. Fred tried to stop me, so don't blame him. And I brought some lunch. I noticed you had nothing but your canteen this morning. Don't look at me so, Hughie!"

Hugh rubbed his hand across his forehead.

"I suppose you wanted to do me a kindness, Jessie. But I'd have been better off alone."

"I'll leave now, if you tell me to."

"No. It would be dangerous for you to try to get out in the dark. I can't let you risk it—as you probably very well know."

A slight smile, unnoticed by Hugh, flickered on Jessie's face for a moment; then she put a bundle of sandwiches on the box beside Hugh, made herself a seat before the fire opposite him and sat down in her own way, apparently immovable—a deep contrast to Hugh's restlessness. But silent and motionless as she was, she was deeply perturbing to Hugh. He found it impossible to return to the deep abstraction in which he had lost himself before she came. And he resented it. If any woman were to sit opposite him, it should be Miriam. And only Miriam could have sounded the depths of the anger and pain with him.

AFTER a time he found himself wondering why he could not go on with his thoughts as though she were not there. There had been a time when he could forget her, though she were within hand-touch, so complete had been the inner life he had built up for himself. But now he realized that, with the coming of Miriam, that time had passed. It was impossible to ignore Jessie now. She interfered too much with his passionate pursuit of happiness.

She was looking at the fire, and he stared at her profile. Something had been at work during the past year, refining the strength of Jessie's face into a beauty that Hugh now grudgingly acknowledged to himself. She turned and caught his glance.

"Better eat your sandwiches, Hughie," she said.

Hugh ignored the suggestion.

"Jessie," he cried, "how can you intrude on me this way? You know I'm in love with Miriam. You know it's Miriam and not you that I'd wish to be here. Why can't you care for Johnny Parnell and let me alone?"

Jessie looked at him steadily.

"I have a right to be here," she said.

"A right!" cried Hugh. "Your rights ceased years ago—when you sneered at me because you found you couldn't bend me to your lazy will."

"I was a fool!" exclaimed Jessie. "How many times do you want me to admit it?"

"I don't want you to admit it at all. I just want you to leave me alone. It's not much to ask—is it?—after what you and your father and mother have done to me."

"No," replied Jessie sadly. "It's not much to ask of me."

Hugh eyed her, still resentfully.

"With your brain and your strength, you might so easily have kept on being all the world to me. And you didn't care, Jessie; you didn't care until another woman took your place. That hurts me. It shouldn't. But it does."

Jessie did not reply, and with a desire for speech upon him as strong as hitherto had been the desire for silence, Hugh went on:

"Life is too short to be so filled with mistakes. My mistakes have been more than yours. But, at least at first, I was not mistaken about the importance of love in a man's life and work. Or a woman's. If you had loved me, your love would have weaned you from your mother and have made a big woman of you. And now it's too late. It's too late. We learn all of it when we are too old to enjoy the results of our enlightenment. I knew this to be so at Cheyenne." He paused.

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"What happened to make you know it at Cheyene?" asked Jessie.

"It was old Whitom made me think of it." returned Hugh, and suddenly, without conscious volition on his part, he began to pour out to her the story of his experiences at the capital.

She was so silent, so motionless that Hugh was hardly conscious that he was speaking aloud. When he had finished, she let the silence last for a long time before she said softly,

"Hughie, if Miriam Page were out of the way, I could make you care for me as much as ever."

She leaned toward him in the firelight, and for a moment Hugh looked deep into her blue eyes. But he only shook his head and said sadly:

"Too late, Jessie! The old thrill is gone. Make no mistake. I love Miriam as I never could love a woman again."

Suddenly Jessie moved from her place opposite him and, with a gesture of abandonment, infinitely pathetic in its helplessness, dropped on the floor of the cave beside him and, laying her head on his knee, burst into racking sobs.

"Hughie! Hughie! My punishment is greater than I can bear!"

Hugh, his face twisted with pain, looked down on the mass of chestnut braids.

"For God's sake, Jessie, don't! You make me feel like a brute. What do you want me to do? Pretend to love you when I don't?"

But Jessie was beyond conversation. She wept on and on as if by tears she sought to wash out the mistakes of her selfish girlhood. After a moment or two Hugh made no attempt to speak. He sat rigidly staring at her, pain, regret, resentment struggling for mastery within him. It seemed to him a very long time before Jessie raised her head and, looking up into his face, said:

"Hughie, I suppose that selfishness wrecks more lives than anything else in the world. My own has wrecked me, and your own selfishness will ruin you if you don't get a different view of life."

"I can't force myself to the impossible," replied Hugh.

Jessie returned slowly to her old seat. Hugh replenished the fire, then leaned wearily against the warm wall behind him and closed his eyes. Gradually his long body sagged in slumber. Jessie watched him for a long time.

It was past midnight when she paused to look at the moon riding high over the river. After a moment's gazing she crossed over to look at Hugh, breathing heavily against the wall. She stooped, kissed him softly on the lips and, stepping lightly, left the cave.

THE sun was well up when Hugh met Fred with the horses at the trail's end. Fred, after a glance at the younger man's face, said nothing, and the trip back to Fort Sioux was made in almost total silence. In fact, they were turning in at the home corral before Fred said,

"You got company."

"Who is it?" grunted Hugh.

"That Mrs. Ellis. She come in on the ten-o'-clock flier last night. She come right to The Lariat, but I shooed her over to the hotel. Told her I'd come for her this morning as soon as you was fixed up to receive visitors. She asked me if you'd got any spring books in yet. Guess she might be got to buy that set of second-hand 'Pansy' books."

"Wait till I get shaved and have some breakfast, Fred. Then you see to it that she and I have an hour or two alone, will you?"

"All right," growled Fred. "I'm glad she's white-headed. Pretty soon The Lariat ain't going to have any more reputation than a dance-hall."

But Hugh already was stamping in at the door of the book shop.

Mrs. Ellis was as glad to see Hugh as he was to see her.

"You look as if political lobbying didn't agree with you," she said, patting his arm affectionately.

"It doesn't," he agreed, placing a chair for her near the heater. "I'm not going to try it that way again."

"What way are you going to try?" asked Mrs. Ellis.

Hugh's reply was indirect. He spoke slowly, his voice so low that his hearer was obliged to lean forward in her chair, bright eyes on his lips.

"Their ignorance and their selfishness was what impressed me most at first. But, thinking it over, I realized that their

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ignorance of my business was no greater than mine of theirs. And that their selfishness toward the welfare of the state as shown toward the Old Sioux Tract was no greater than mine toward the Children's Code. Mrs. Ellis, they are mediocre in brains, every one of them. If you will help me, I'll make that roughneck legislature swallow the Children's Code and the Old Sioux Tract at one mouthful."

Mrs. Ellis grew suddenly red and as suddenly white.

"Do you realize," she asked, "very fully what you are saying? In order to do this, Mrs. Morgan and I shall have to make you governor of Wyoming. We can do it. But I believe that you will have to make an even greater sacrifice than you realize. You are thinking of the pain of giving up your work as a paleontologist. I am thinking of something much more painful." She hesitated, then gathered herself together resolutely. "Mr. Stewart, as governor-elect, your private life will be held up for the scrutiny of every man, woman and child in Wyoming. The American voter is a curiously illogical animal. No matter what his or her private life may be, that voter demands that the private life of its governors and its presidents shall be beyond reproach. This is particularly true of the woman voter. My dear boy, if you go into this, you will have to end the gossip about Miriam Page and return to your wife."

Hugh drew himself slowly to his feet. As he did so there was a sudden fusillade of rifle-shots in the street, and Johnny Parnell, gun in hand, burst through the door of The Lariat.

What will Hugh do about Miriam? And she turns up, too, in the next instalment of "The Lariat."
See May EVERYBODY'S—out April 14th.

RISK THEIR LIVES IN TURKEY TO UNCOVER HIDDEN JEWELS

Searchers, Confronted First by a Strange Murder in New York, Meet Queer Complications in England

FIGHT BRIGANDS IN CONSTANTINOPLE

"The Bucoleon Treasure," a Mystery and Adventure Novel by Arthur D. Howden Smith

May *EVERYBODY'S*—out April 14th

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His Own People

Jim Thought His Glory Was Greater Than That of the Sun; He Found It Less Than That of the Fire-fly. The Work of a Writer New to Everybody's

By L. Patrick Greene

FROM the tent came the sounds of splashing water and a voice, a pleasing barytone, raised in the rollicking "Song of the Freebooters." Jim, the Hottentot, ceased for a moment grooming the silky coat of a black stallion and, squatting on his haunches, listened. His thick lips parted in a wide grin; his eyes danced with excitement.

As the voice came to the end of a stanza, Jim jumped to his feet, made the clicking noise of happiness and danced a few shuffling steps before applying himself with renewed zest to his task.

Not that the stallion required grooming. Had his coat been rubbed all over with a lady's handkerchief, the dainty fabric would have come away unsoiled. Nor had Jim been commanded to perform this task—in things of that sort the major, his *baas*, rarely commanded; there was no need. It was simply a manifestation of Jim's exuberant spirits.

It was not the words of the song that cheered Jim. They were English and, therefore, meaningless to him. Nor was it the tune which urged his feet to dancing steps. To Jim's savage ears it was discordant; the beat was a thing of no rhythm.

But—the major was singing. Therefore the major was happy; therefore Jim was happy. To the Hottentot, that song meant that the major had successfully completed a deal, and whether that deal was within or without the law meant nothing to Jim. The fact that the major was much sought after by various police officials was ignored by the Hottentot. It is doubtful, indeed, if he understood just what was his *baas's* profession, or in what way it was illegal. For the matter of that, many white men looked upon I. D. B. as a political offense rather than a criminal one. And the major was an I. D. B. and a criminal in the eyes of the law.

And of all the I. D. B.'s, the major—not altogether a myth—was by far the cleverest—clever in that he was *known* to be an I. D. B. but had so far escaped conviction. Yet he was popular with the police. They sensed that beneath the bland, dudish, almost effeminate exterior was a man, that the inane, almost vacuous expression of his face was but a mask to hide the keen working of his brain, that his drawl and "silly ass" turns of speech were but a pose.

"Yah!" Jim confided to the stallion. "The *baas* has made his play—or else he makes ready to play. Else why should he buy a new span of mules, foodstuffs in abundance and a wagon-load of trade goods. Yet that is strange. At all other times he has scorned to deal in trade. But what matter? A game is afoot, and with that I am content."

The singing stopped suddenly, and now from the tent sounded the purring, hissing noise of a man briskly toweling himself. A moment later—just as the sun was appearing above the distant horizon and the gray clouds of night swiftly changed through shades of pink and crimson, purple, lavender and glorious gold to fleecy white, to nothingness—the major came to the opening of the tent.

He watched in silence until the kaleidoscope of colors had passed away. He drank the sweet freshness of the morning air in

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thirsty gulps, his nostrils dilated, catching each fragrant odor of the veld. In these few moments he stored up the strength which enabled him to ignore the scorching, pitiless sun through the long African day.

Even as he watched, the sun rose perceptibly above the horizon, the last vestige of cloud disappeared, the drops of dew vanished from the herbage. Above was the electric blue of the sky; at his feet, showing between the straggling tufts of grass, was the red, hard-baked veld, which stretched in all directions, unbroken by human habitations, as far as eye could reach.

The major was naked save for a towel he wore about his loins, naked save for that—and a monocle. His hair, tousled from his bath, was streaked with gray. But the skin of his face was firm and smooth; his teeth were white and even.

The only suggestion of his body was one of perfect health, of strength well distributed and in the complete control of an active brain. When he moved, the muscles which rippled under his skin were not knotted, ugly things, but delicate yet powerful engines which obeyed the lever of his will.

JIM, as his *baas* came out of the tent, left the stallion and, squatting close by, stared at the major in open-eyed admiration. Jim—his own body squat and ugly but immensely powerful—always found cause to wonder in his *baas's* symmetrical proportions.

'Jim," said the major, speaking in the vernacular, "after we have scoffed, we trek."

"That is good, *baas*," Jim said complacently. "That I knew."

"Yes? Then perhaps you know, O man of wisdom, where we go?"

"Nay! That is not known to me. But what matter? We trek; that is sufficient. We see new country. We live as men should live, and not herded together like senseless cattle, fighting over the same grazing-grounds when there is plenty of fodder but a little way off. We hunt and, if we kill, we eat. If not——"

"We open a tin and eat just the same, old dear," the major interposed in English.

"Oh, damme, yaas, *baas*," Jim agreed.

"We will trek south, Jim," the major said slowly.

"South, *baas?*" Jim moved uneasily. Of what worth is the south? Should a man spit there, it will fall upon another's body. When one drinks, many gather to catch the drippings."

"Then do not spit—do not drink, Jim."

"What then, *baas?* Shall a man die?"

The major laughed.

"You do not like the South, Jim."

"Nay, *baas*." Jim was very emphatic.

"Yet your kraal is in the Southlands."

"That is true, *baas*. And a hyena is born in a hole in the ground—but he does not stay there."

"True, O knower of all things!" bantered the major. "But the hyena will return to the hole when hard pressed by foes."

"It is not known to me that any seek to take me," Jim said simply.

"It cannot be answered." The major laughed. Then: "But if the hyena has a mate, what, then, Jim?. Will he not make a nest in that hole?"

"Of a truth—yes, *baas*. That is known to you. But we are dealing in words of no meaning." Jim seemed ill at ease.

'Two—or is it three?—wives await you in that kraal of yours, Jim."

"Four, *baas*," Jim said mournfully. "When a man is young, he is also a fool."

"Four reasons why we should trek south, Jim."

"Nay, *baas!* Four reasons why we should trek north."

The major laughed softly.

"Without doubt they mourn for you, Jim. Four wives mourning a husband—many children lacking a father!"

"That may well be. But I think no children bear my name. As for the women—these ten years they have not seen me. Perchance they dwell in the huts of other men. If not, and they still mourn for me, they would resent my return, which would deprive them of their chief joy—women delight in tears. Is not that known to you, *baas?* Nay! Let well-be be. I am content, and so, doubtless, are they."

"And so"—the major spoke English now, speaking his thoughts aloud as he often did when alone with the Hottentot. A lazy drawl, which was not in evidence when speaking the vernacular, crept into his voice—'and so," he said, "the dear old fellow hasn't seen his bally people for ten years. That's the deuce and all of a time. I wonder why he hasn't gone back. If I know Jim—and I fancy I know him as

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well as I know myself—he is anxious to go back despite his bally protestations to the contrary. I have been selfish—beastly so. Ten years, I think—yes; ten years he has been with me, always at my beck and call. He's been a bally brick—never groused—always ready to follow where I led. By Jove, what a rotter I feel! I've kept him from his own kind all these years, and—well, he shall go back—and go back like a blooming duke. By Jove—yes! He's earned thousands, yes—thousands for me, and I've never paid him a blooming tikkey! I've even stopped him from getting jolly good and drunk—and how the old boy does enjoy getting blotto! He shall have all the trade stuff. But I'll have to go back with him or he'll drink himself stony broke on the way."

The major lapsed into a thoughtful silence. After a few minutes he said abruptly to the Hottentot,

"How much did I promise to pay you when you first came to me, Jim?"

"Ten shilling a month, *baas*."

"And how much *have* I paid you?"

"Of what need to tell, *baas*? What is that between us two?"

"How much, Jim?"

"Nothing, *baas*." Jim laughed. "But I have not wanted for food or clothes, nor have I found life a burden—living with you."

The major's eyes gleamed.

"And you have found many stones for me, Jim?"

"Many, *baas*. And will doubtless find many more."

"And you have been beaten because you were the major's boy?"

"And would have been beaten many times more had I *not* been the major's servant," Jim countered happily.

Again the major lapsed into a thoughtful silence, and Jim shuffled uneasily. Then,

"Is it permitted me to know why you left the kraal, Jim?"

"Of a truth, yes, *baas*. I would have told you before, but it seemed a matter of small moment.

"My father was the headman of the kraal and chief of all the kraals in the valley. When he died, I, his oldest son, was his lawful successor. But my brother, a man of great cunning although small of stature, sought my place. And so, *baas*, the people of the valley were divided. The old men, the wise men of the kraals were on my side, but most of the warriors shouted the name of my brother.

"Perchance, had I desired to put the matter to a test, I could have defeated my brother. But to what end? Much blood would have been shed—and bloodshed always begets bloodshed. So I left the valley secretly; no man knew of my going. Only my wives knew. I bade them follow me, but they would not. They scorned me for a coward and a fool because I would not fight for the place that was rightfully mine. Women are ever more eager for the loud-sounding noises of authority than are men. Is that not known to you? They say it is for the sake of their children they seek advancement. Therein they lie. It is for themselves. They delight to bask in the shadow of their man's authority.

"And so I left the valley—alone. Nor have I since returned to that place; nor do I wish to do so now. Yet that valley is a goodly place. Its men folk are men among men. The cattle are sleek, for fodder is plentiful; it is sweet and green. Nowhere do the crops yield so plentifully as in that valley; nowhere are the maidens more pleasing to the eye. And nowhere, *baas*, do the women folk make such strength-giving beer. But I have been away from the herd too long to desire to return now— Pardon, *baas*, if I have wearied you."

The major did not speak, but, turning, reentered the tent and began to dress. The Hottentot, after a moment's hesitation, busily occupied himself with preparations for the morning meal. He seemed strangely clumsy. His movements were lethargic. Several times he sighed loudly.

"Jim!" the major called presently.

"Yah, *baas*?"

"When we have had scoff, we trek south. And we go to visit your kraal, Jim, in the valley."

"It is an order, *baas*," Jim assented mournfully, but his face beamed with joy.

THREE weeks later the major and Jim came within sight of the valley—Jim's valley. For the past week the trail had led between—and sometimes over—groups of kopjes and now, from the top of one of these stony hills, the major saw a green oasis surrounded by a barren country.

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"It is indeed a country to boast of, Jim," he said softly.

And Jim, his broad, homely face all smiles, assented. He pointed out the numerous kraals which seemed to grow mushroomlike amid the luxuriant foliage. Spirals of smoke floating lazily upward suggested peace and well-being—and the preparation of food. He pointed to the precipitous walls of the valley, which made a surprise attack unfeasible; indeed, the only entrance to the valley was a steep and winding path directly at their feet. To all intents and purposes the valley was cut off from communication with the outside world, ignored by the white men by reason of the miles and miles of non-productive, almost waterless land which surrounded it, and protected from warlike tribes by its sheer inaccessibility.

"And do no white men come here, Jim?" the major asked incredulously. "A storekeeper in this place would quickly grow rich."

Jim scowled.

"The police come, *baas,* once a year to collect taxes. And that is not altogether just. Look you—why should my people pay a tax for what is already theirs?"

There was an answer to this, and a good one, but the major knew Jim would not appreciate it; so he made no reply, but, looking keenly at the Hottentot, smiled a little at the expression on his face.

"I think I'll open a store in your valley, Jim," he said presently.

"That you must not do!" Jim said fiercely. Then, rather ashamed of his outburst, he added: "Nay, *baas;* do not do that. My people would not understand. They know very little of the white men—when the police come for the tax, the women are all sent away. Only the men remain in the kraals. Once, long ago, a white man came and set up a store, and my people trusted him. But he betrayed that trust, and so he died. Since that time the valley has been closed to white men. No white men may dwell there, and in that the police have aided us. We pay a tax, but in all other things we live as we lived before the white men came to this land."

The major nodded absently and returned to the place where he had pitched camp. Jim, with many a backward glance at the valley below, reluctantly followed him.

"Put pack-saddles on two of the mules, Jim," the major ordered, and, climbing up into the covered wagon, he watched as Jim sullenly went about his task.

"It is finished," said Jim presently, and led the two mules up to the wagon.

"Yes; it is finished, Jim," the major echoed sadly.

Rousing himself, he opened one of the chests containing trade goods and handed its contents to Jim.

"Load them on the mules, Jim."

"But the *baas* does not mean to trade, surely?" Jim protested.

"And if I would—must I ask *thy* permission?" The major's voice was stern. Never before had he spoken to Jim like that, and Jim flinched.

"It is an order, *baas,*" he said humbly.

BUT it was with no enthusiasm that he loaded the mules with a weird assortment of knives and mouth-organs, alarm-clocks and bottles of cheap scent, whistles and patent medicines, colored beads and canned foods, gaily patterned cloths, shirts, opera-hats, cheap toys—such as monkey-on-a-stick—and corsets.

And, last of all, the major handed Jim an old carbine. It was useless, but Jim took it with great awe and handled it as gingerly as if it had been a piece of dynamite due to explode at any moment. The Hottentot was notoriously afraid of firearms, although he was wont to boast to any chance-met native that he was an even greater marksman than his *baas.* As a matter of fact, he had fired but two shots in his life. The first had been quite involuntary; on the second occasion he had been forced to chose between tackling a lion barehanded or firing his gun. And Jim had chosen the braver course.

"Are the pack-saddles full, Jim?" the major asked.

"Aye, *baas.* There is no room for more."

"Then take these also."

The major counted out into Jim's battered helmet one hundred gold sovereigns.

"For me, *baas?*" Jim exclaimed. "But why?"

"You are going to your people, are you not? And shall the servant of the major go empty-handed? No! Now get you gone—you and your brothers, the mules."

"*Baas! Inkosi!*" Jim's voice boomed out

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into happy salutation and thanks. Without further word he turned and, with boisterous cries, urged the mules in the direction of the path leading to the valley. He had not gone very far, however, when his footsteps lagged and, turning, he came running back to the major.

"But will not the *baas* come with me?" he asked.

"Nay. Have you forgotten the law concerning a white man entering the valley?"

"It is true—I had forgotten. But how shall I see my *baas* again? Where shall I find him?"

"Five days I will await you here. After that, you will not find me. I shall go my own way."

"Have no fear, *baas;* I shall return before five days have passed. I am old—not very old—yet in some things I am as a child. It is only that I wish my people to see me as I am." And Jim, all bedecked in a cast-off white-duck suit of the major's, strutted peacocklike. Suddenly he sobered. "There is something, *baas,*" he said wistfully, "which makes me forget the ten years I have spent with you. I forget that I am Jim, the major's servant, and think only that I am Mytata, the son of a chief."

"Then go, Mytata. *Hamba gaghle*—may thy path be smooth."

"Aye! *Shlahla gaghle,*" Jim replied absently. "Remain in peace." And he hurried after the mules.

A few paces, and again he stopped.

"First suffer, *baas,*" he called back, "that I prepare thy evening meal."

"Not so," the major answered. "Shall the son of a chief do the work of women?"

Jim's right hand shot up in salutation, and he hesitated no longer. A few minutes later he disappeared from sight over the brow of the hill.

The major was an expert camp-cook; men who had hunted with him spoke in awed voices of his skill. Yet, somehow, that night the buck kidneys tasted like leather to him, the coffee bitter.

IT WAS long after sundown when Jim, the Hottentot, tired but happily excited, came to the kraal which stood sentry-like at the foot of the steep trail leading from the hills into the valley. As he came nearer to the cluster of beehive-shaped huts, he broke out into the joyful song of the home-coming. It seemed as if the world held no sound but Jim's joyful pæan of praise. As he sang, he leaped high into the air—he was a dancing goblin, a moon-worshiper. He flung stones at the mules, urging them to better speed.

Then suddenly he ceased singing—he was quite close to the gate of the kraal now—and listened for sounds of life within, expecting to hear the voices of men, the barking of dogs, the cries of children and the soft lullabies of women. But all was silent save for the timid bleat of a goat and the lowing of a motherless calf.

Jim hurried on, stilling his half-born fears with the thought that it was late, that the men folk were asleep.

And so he came to the gate of the kraal, entered unchallenged and came to the large clearing before the hut of the headman. There he stood undecided—astounded. The place was strangely deserted. On hands and knees he entered and explored several of the near-by huts—risking an assagai-thrust—anxious to greet and be greeted. But the huts were empty; the fire-ashes were cold.

One of the pack-mules brayed mournfully, echoing Jim's bewilderment, and the Hottentot, as one in a dream, unsaddled his animals, turned them into the cattle corral and then sat down beside his wealth, endeavoring to reason out the cause of the kraal's desertion. After a little while, assuring himself that the morning would bring its explanation, he slept.

He was wakened by the scent of cooking food and the consciousness that he was watched.

Springing quickly to his feet, he saw four women seated at the entrance of a hut just across from him. Two of them were monstrously fat, a third tall and ludicrously thin. The fourth was neither fat nor thin—a meek, self-effacing woman who shrank behind the other three as if for protection.

"*Sauka bona, abafazi,*" said Jim, making a majorlike bow.

"*Eh bor—sauka bona,*" the four replied tonelessly, then waited expectantly.

Jim continued bravely,

"My eyes are blinded."

"The rays of the sun are very bright," the four replied, simpering at Jim's compliment.

"Where are the men folk?" Jim asked.

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"They are not here." The tall, thin one's voice was strident and shrewish.

"They have gone to the head kraal." The two fat women spoke as one.

"And all the people have gone with them," said she who was neither fat nor thin.

"Then why are you here?"

"Because we are women of no name, we are women who have been put to shame. Our husband left us. He——"

"Of what need to tell a stranger that?" interposed the fat ones. "His going was your fault, O noisy stick of flesh!"

"Not mine but yours—fat, lazy cows that you are!"

And then ensued a heated altercation which only ceased when Jim exclaimed:

"Peace! I am hungry. Let us eat."

Quickly order was restored, and food and beer was set before him.

"And why," asked Jim, his hunger appeased, "have all the people gone to the kraal of the headman?"

"Because the chief is dead, leaving no man child, and another must be chosen ere the sun sets this night. Would that Mytata were here!"

"Mytata!" Jim was startled.

"Yes. Our husband. Do you know of him?" The voice held a note of suspicion.

"I have heard the name," mumbled Jim, but he started excitedly to his feet and, catching the mules, feverishly began to saddle them.

"I go to the kraal of the chief," he said, in answer to the women's questions.

"And what will you do there, stranger?" mocked the shrewish one. "Meet death, belike. Better that you stay here with us—we have brewed much beer."

"Nay!" Jim exclaimed impatiently. "I go not as a stranger. I go as Mytata to take the place that is rightfully mine.

"Mytata! Art thou indeed Mytata?" the fat ones exclaimed breathlessly.

"Without doubt," Jim said proudly. "And you—you cows are my wives. So now be at peace."

"At peace—yes; after I have had my say." The thin woman advanced threateningly, her hand upraised in anger. "For ten years we have been scorned because of you, and now you shall pay."

"Yes! Now you shall pay!" One of the fat women picked up a knobkerrie and struck viciously at Jim. Only a catlike leap saved him from a broken skull.

He looked about him despairingly for an avenue of escape, for the women were closing in on him on all sides.

"This is folly!" he cried. "I die now, and you remain women scorned forever! Let me but go to the kraal and assert my right, and the long years of waiting will be forgotten in the homage that will come to you, O women of the chief!" The women hesitated. "Besides," continued Jim craftily, "I have brought many wondrous presents for you."

The thin woman nodded.

"Let him go his way, sisters," she said. "Let him take the place that is his. After that, we shall know how to deal with him."

"Then hasten, Mytata," said the fat ones. "We will come also."

"Aye," Jim assented relievedly; "that is your right. But you must be dressed in a manner befitting the wives of a chief. See!" He took from the pack-saddles an assortment of colored cloths and beads. Other trade "truck" quickly followed, and soon the four women, richly clad, were ready for the journey.

Mafuta, one of the fat women, wore pink corsets about her massive calves. Macabe, the tall, thin one, had suspended an alarm-clock from the lobe of her ear. Mabele, the other fat one, wore long white stockings upon her arms. Inyoni, the fourth woman, was content with the beads and a head-dress of vivid scarlet cloth.

Jim looked them over with the eye of a connoisseur, then, shouldering his carbine, led the way out of the kraal.

TWO hours later Jim and his retinue arrived at the chief kraal of the valley.

By virtue of his evident wealth, his carbine and his name—which the four women shouted continuously—he was permitted to enter the large hut where the old men of the tribe were holding solemn conclave.

But the women were forced to remain outside. Their claim for reinstatement had not yet been upheld; this man who called himself Mytata might be an imposter—that was for the council of headmen to decide. So the women took their stand beside Jim's mules and their burdens, surrounded by the envious women of the kraals.

As Jim entered the council-hut, carrying his carbine over his shoulder, Tomasi, the

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chief of the headmen present, was loudly espousing the claim of his nephew, Jhentsi.

"If there is any man," Tomasi was saying, "that is better fitted than Jhentsi to dwell in the hut of the chief, let his name be spoken."

"There is none other," chorused the headmen. "The choice is a good one. We are well content. Let us proclaim his name to the people."

"Wait!" cried Jim. "What of Mytata? Is he not the lawful chief?"

"Mytata has gone from us; he is dead belike," Tomasi said sternly. "And now, having answered your question, stranger, tell us what you do here—and take heed to your answer. Death walks close on your heels. Speak quickly—before I summon warriors to take you away."

"Softly! Softly! I have another question. Look on this"—Jim aimed his carbine at Tomasi—"and see how death has almost caught up with you."

"*Au-al*" It was a low-breathed note of astonishment. The headmen were astounded that the white man's "fire-stick" should be in the hands of one of their own people.

"What else would you know?" Tomasi's voice trembled.

"If Mytata were here, would there be any question of his chieftainship?"

"Nay."

"Then look no further—for I am Mytata!"

JIM spoke the words with all the pride with which he was wont to say, "He is the major, and I—I am Jim, his servant."

The headmen crowded round him, peering at him closely—recognizing him, yet not quite sure that they recognized him. In ten years a man changes, and Jim's dress confused them.

"It is truly Mytata," said some.

"He is an impostor," said others.

Sensing the cause of their bewilderment, Jim doffed his helmet, quickly stripped himself of his ill-fitting clothes and stood before them clad only in a loin-cloth—not all the garments of civilization had ever induced Jim to part with that. And then the doubters doubted no longer.

"It is Mytata!" they cried.

"A word!" cried Tomasi. And, because he was an old man and full of wisdom, they listened to him. "What claim has Mytata on the people of the valley? He left us of his own will, and has been gone from us these many years—wandering wheresoever he wished, serving, without doubt, many white men. He apes their ways; he is marked with their evil. He is soft and knows not the ways of the hunt. Our tongue is strange to him. He has forsaken our customs. And now, when he returns, broken, a beggar, you would do him honor—putting to shame a warrior who has been ever faithful. He——"

"Peace, old one," Jim interposed hotly, "before I forget that you are old! I have served a white man—yes. But only that I might gain some of the white man's wisdom. Having gained my end, I put the white man on one side—he was nothing to me. I am soft, you say? Bah! What say you to that, headmen? You used to be proper judges of men."

"This is no weakling, Tomasi," murmured one of the headmen, as he expertly eyed Jim's barrellike chest and felt the mighty muscles of his legs and arms. "We have no warrior who could stand against him. He could take up that nephew of thine in one hand and throw him further than the width of this hut."

"No; I am not soft." Jim laughed, and, taking hold of the pole which supported the roof of the hut, he raised it from the ground. The roof-poles creaked and groaned, and the headmen cried out in alarm:

"Let be! You will have the hut fall upon us!"

"Let be!" echoed Tomasi. "At least you are not soft."

"And I am no beggar," Jim continued, as he let the pole down to the ground. "This"—he patted the carbine—"is worth more than all the cattle in your kraal, Tomasi. Some day you shall see me kill a lion with it, old man."

From his pockets he showered gold pieces upon the floor of the hut—a hundred of them in all.

"That will pay the taxes for the people of the valley," he continued. "Outside, on *my* mules, I have gifts for all you headmen. Is it permitted that I order them to be brought in?"

"It is permitted!" shouted the headmen gleefully.

At Jim's command, warriors took the

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packs off the mules and brought them into the hut. Then, with a lordly air, the air of a paternal autocrat, Jim distributed his gifts. The weighty matters of public welfare were forgotten as gray-bearded headmen blew lustily upon mouth-organs, twanged upon jew's-harps or stuck opera-hats upon their heads and posed delightedly.

Even Tomasi seemed to be appeased as, squatting in a corner of the hut, he examined with childish awe a gaudily painted monkey-on-a-stick.

That same night the council of headmen announced Mytata as their choice for chief, although he would not actually assume authority until the night of the full moon—five days hence.

Many of the people received the news with great enthusiasm, for they remembered Jim of old. But many others grieved, for Jhentsi was a man well liked and would have made a good chief.

THE next two days passed very swiftly for Jim. He lived in a state of perpetual excitement and intoxication. The women of the kraals had brewed much beer in anticipation of the festivity accompanying the choosing of a chief, and for once Jim was able to drink his fill.

In all things his slightest wish was instantly gratified. Was he thirsty? A comely maiden presented him with a calabash of beer. Was he hungry? Food was set before him. Anon he wished to sleep, and even the dogs ceased their noisy clamor.

And so Jim—eating and sleeping and drinking, waited on, hand and foot—gradually assumed an intolerant air of arrogance, came to believe that he possessed all the virtues the people attributed to him. And constantly he boasted of his prowess as a hunter.

"No man," he said, "no, not even among the white hunters, has killed as many lions as I have."

"Show us the manner in which you slay *Silwane*, O Great One," the warriors demanded.

And Jim, staggering to his feet, aimed his carbine at some imaginary beast.

"Bang!" He said. "That is all, my children. The lion is dead."

"*Au—a!* A mighty hunter! Bang! And the lion is dead."

Jim slowly reseated himself, nodded his head in solemn gravity and explained further,

"But you must understand that the voice of this fire-stick is louder than all your voices—it can be heard above the loudest thunderclap."

"Then let us hear its voice," sneered Tomasi—he had broken his monkey-on-a-stick—"or is your voice only the voice of a braggart?"

"Have a care, old one! Once before I said that death was close at your heels."

"You are not yet chief," retorted Tomasi. "Until the full of the moon my voice is greater than yours."

Jim nodded.

"That may be. But talk not too loud unless I remember your words when the time comes."

"I care not what happens to me then. I do not care to live under the rule of a boaster and a drunkard. Woe is me! Jhentsi, my nephew, should be sitting in your place.

"Brave words!" shouted Jim. "Thou art a man after my own heart. You think I am a liar because I speak of my prowess with the fire-stick. I would let you hear its voice, but the huts would be shaken to their foundations—they would collapse; your ears would be deafened. Yet, if you still doubt my word, I will——"

"Nay!" protested the other headmen. "We do not doubt you, O Mytata! Pay no heed to this fool. The sweets of authority have turned sour in his mouth. Let us drink, O Great One, and forget this ancient babbler."

But there was a fly in Jim's ointment of happiness—four flies, to be exact—four women, who tried to order his outgoings and incomings—four women who constantly nagged him and squabbled with each other.

And of the four, Mecabe, the shrew, was the most persistent. In order to silence her, and also as a warning to the other three, Jim refused to acknowledge her as his head wife—and that she was—threatening to divorce her if she gave him more trouble.

This, to a certain extent, stopped Mecabe's noisy tirade, but it also made her exceedingly bitter toward Jim. News of the dissension in Jim's family having come to Tomasi's ears, he at once sent for the

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disgruntled Mecabe, bidding her come secretly to his hut.

AS SHE entered, Tomasi rose quickly to his feet.

"Hail, woman of the chief!" he said. "To the ears, the eyes and the mouth of the man who will be chief, Tomasi gives greeting."

Mecabe smiled bitterly.

"You do me too much honor. I am nothing. Mytata has put me on one side."

"That is not possible! Mecabe jokes." Tomasi's air of astonishment was well feigned.

"I do not deal in jokes of that sort. But why did you send for me?"

"Because a whisper had come to my ears of the things you have just told me. I could not believe."

"And now you know that the whisper was true, what then?"

"Doubtless Mecabe mourns because she has not found favor in the eyes of her lord? Doubtless she would do much to regain that which she has lost?"

Mecabe's eyes flashed angrily.

"I only desire," she said, "to see him put to shame. Perhaps he would then regret that he had put me on one side."

"If Jhentsi were chief, he would see to it that you were given your right place."

"But Jhentsi is not chief."

"Yet he would be—were Mytata not here."

"You mean that I should kill him?"

Tomasi nodded assent.

"Death is not too great a punishment for his treatment of you," he said.

"That is true—but there is a better way. If he died, many men would murmur; but if he were to become a thing to laugh at, then—" She hesitated.

"Then," Tomasi finished, "Jhentsi, my nephew, would become chief."

"That might be done," Mecabe said slowly.

Tomasi's eyes gleamed.

"Yes; that might be done," he assented. "But how?"

"He has continually spoken, has he not," Mecabe said slowly, "of how he can shoot with that fire-stick of his? Yet it comes to me that he is lying, that he is afraid of the thing."

"I had thought somewhat that way," said Tomasi.

"Aye!" Mecabe was all eagerness now. "But you have not heard him speak, as I have, when the sickness of much drinking was upon him. He is afraid of it, I say; and he is afraid that the time will come when he *must* use it."

"And——"

"And I would hasten that day."

"Words of wisdom!" scoffed Tomasi. "But how?"

"Are there no lions in the valley?"

"Of a truth, yes."

"Then arrange a lion-hunt, O Tomasi! Let your warriors show their prowess before Mytata, and see that he is there to witness it. Let the beaters drive the lion up to where Mytata stands, and then, when it is time to make the kill, let the warriors forsake him. Not one must cast an assagai. Then shall we see how great a hunter is this man Mytata."

"Much wisdom is truly thine, Mecabe!" Tomasi cried joyfully. "It shall be done. To-morrow shall be the time of the hunt. To-night I shall make all things ready. And rest assured that men of my kraal will form the body-guard of Mytata. This is a way to my liking. I have no desire to set brother against brother and kraal against kraal. If Mytata comes through this test, I will no longer work against him."

"And you will not forget me?"

"Nay! If Jhentsi becomes chief, you shall be his head wife. If the test fails—should Mytata prove to be no boaster—I shall still see that you are rewarded."

With that, Mecabe was well content, and would have left the hut, but Tomasi stayed her.

"There is one other thing: Last night a white man was captured by warriors of my kraal; by guile they captured him. He rode a black devil of a horse. My warriors would have killed him, but he claimed friendship with Mytata. Therefore they brought him to me secretly, that I might pass judgment. Has Mytata spoken of this man?"

"What manner of man is he? Is he round of face, beardless, with gray eyes that see all things? Does he laugh often? Does he in some things seem womanish—yet is all man? Does he wear a thing that glitters in his eye? Does he——"

Everybody's Magasine, April, 1923

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"There is no need to say more," Tomasi interposed. "It is the very man. What know you of him?"

Mecabe laughed scornfully.

"Through the long hours of the night hath Mytata wearied us with talk of this man. He is as the rising and the setting of the sun in Mytata's eyes. The man who would be chief was the white man's slave. In his drunken cups he told me how he debased himself before the white man—cooking his food, drawing water and the like—performing all manner of tasks which are only fit for women."

Tomasi nodded.

"What shall I do with this white man?"

"Bring him before Mytata and let us see if that man will keep the law which says, 'Death to the white man who enters the valley.' "

"Again you counsel wisely. It shall be done," said Tomasi.

JIM was seated before his hut, watching the departure of the young men who were to "drive" the lion to the kill.

A little distance to the right of him, armed with the sharp-stabbing assagais, were the warriors who had been selected to kill the lion when the beaters had driven it to them; they were the African matadors. At Jim's left sat a group of the headmen. Tomasi was among them.

At length the last of the long line of beaters passed out of the kraal gate. Already their shouts and the din of tom-toms sounded faintly in the distance.

Jim stirred uneasily, looked at the pot of beer before him and sighed, looked at his carbine—and shuddered.

"Is it time for us to be moving, Tomasi?" he asked.

"There is plenty of time, O Great Hunter! First, we would have your counsel concerning a weighty matter ——"

"Let that wait until I have been proclaimed chief," Jim said irritably. "Why bother me now?"

"It is a matter which will not wait. It concerns a white man taken prisoner by the young men of my kraal."

"A white man?" There was a note of apprehension in Jim's voice. "I warned him not to enter the valley," he muttered to himself. Then, aloud, "What manner of white man?"

"You shall see for yourself."

Tomasi shouted an order, and four warriors emerged from a near-by hut. They carried the major, bound hand and foot, between them.

"You know the law?" Tomasi questioned.

"Aye, Tomasi; I know the law," Jim answered despondently.

"And know that it cannot be changed?"

"Aye. I know that, too."

The four warriors put the major on the ground at Jim's feet. Jim looked at him with lack-luster eyes—eyes which held no look of recognition.

"What make you in this valley, white man?" he asked sternly, almost fiercely.

"I am looking for my servant," the major answered. "Have you seen him?

"What manner of man is he? What is his name? Yet think not that that excuse will serve."

"He is somewhat of your build. A man of no great worth—given to much drinking, full of vain conceits and a great liar. He——"

"I know not the man," Jim interposed hastily.

"His name is Jim," the major added, as an afterthought.

"Jim? I know not the name. What say you, Tomasi? Shall we let this man go?"

"No!" The old headman sprang to his feet. "The law may not be broken. He must die."

"You hear, white man? Have you anything to say?"

"Only this: Should you, at any time, meet the man Jim, tell him that you killed his *baas*."

Jim was overcome with confusion but, recovering quickly, ordered the warriors to take the major back to the hut.

"I will deal with this white man tonight," he said. "And now, O Tomasi, let us go to the hunt."

Shouldering his carbine, he led the way out of the kraal, followed closely by the body-guard and the councilors. The four warriors who had carried the major to the hut also followed after a little while.

The major, bound hand and foot, lay on the ground of the hut, cursing the curiosity and the anxiety to learn of Jim's welfare which had caused him to enter the valley.

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He wondered at Jim's attitude—astonished that his old-time devoted body-servant should have evinced such a cold-blooded indifference to his *baas's* fate.

The major had not openly appealed to Jim for mercy—that was not the major's way. Besides, he knew that Jim's hands were probably tied in a matter of this sort and that any attempt to show leniency would be fatal to Jim's chance of becoming chief. The warriors who had captured the major had told him all about the choosing of a new chief.

Still, the major could not but reflect on Jim's ingratitude—at the same time excusing it. The call of race and color is strong; a man quickly reverts to the traditions of his people.

But this was a rotten way to die! He strained at the sinews which bound him.

"They've done a bally good job," he reflected aloud. "Believe there's no way out unless Jim gets a change of heart—and that's not likely."

He looked longingly at his rifle and belt of cartridges which his captors had hung on the wall of the hut. A knife was hanging from the belt. He tried to reach it, but, bound as he was, it was impossible.

He looked round the hut, hoping to find some sharp instrument—a stone, even—with which he might cut himself free. But his search was unrewarded.

By careful maneuvering he managed to work his monocle out of his tunic pocket and let it fall to the ground. But it broke into pieces far too small to be of service to him.

Then, and it was with difficulty he restrained from shouting with joy, he saw a thin wisp of smoke—it was almost imperceptible—rising from the charred log, the remains of the morning cook-fire, in the center of the hut.

He rolled painfully over to it and blew very cautiously, endeavoring to fan the few visible sparks into a flame.

The wisp of smoke thickened; the glow of sparks brightened, and soon a little yellow flame flickered feebly.

An ill-judged puff put it out again, but he persevered, and shortly the flame appeared again. Turning his back—his hands were tied behind him—he held his wrists over the flame. The sweat poured from his face; he bit his lips to hold in check the moans of pain that sought utterance. He felt the strands give, and in a little while—yet it seemed an eternity of agony—his hands were free.

The rest was easy.

Then, crawling on hands and knees, his rifle slung at his back, the cartridge-belt at his waist, he cautiously left the hut.

Luckily the women folk and such men as were too young or too old to join the hunt were taking their noonday siesta; so he reached the gate of the kraal and the bush beyond unseen.

But his difficulties were not yet over. He had yet to gain the trail which led from the valley, and to do this he would have to pass through the ring of beaters. That he could do this he had no doubt; but it would entail bloodshed, and the major was adverse to that. After all, he was a trespasser. Jim had warned him not to enter the valley.

If he had his horse it would have been different. The warriors then would be unable to get close enough to him to be a serious menace. But he did not have his horse, did not know where the stallion was. So he determined to wait in a near-by corn patch for night and darkness.

Entering the patch, he came to a clearing fringed with Kafir-orange trees. He retraced his steps a little way, then lowered himself wearily to the ground. He was conscious now of a dull pain in his wrists. They were badly swollen and blistered. After a little while he slept.

He was wakened some hours later—it was nearing sunset—by the shouts of natives and the beating of tom-toms—a very pandemonium of noise. And, dwarfing all other sounds, the angry snarls of a lion at bay.

THE lion comes, O Mytata!" said Tomasi.

Jim grunted.

"It is well," he grumbled. "There is not a blade of grass in this whole valley on which I have not trodden this day. 'The lion will go there,' you said, and we went there. 'He will come here,' you say, and we have come to this place. I am thirsty. I will get me some fruit."

Jim walked to one of the orange trees which fringed the clearing.

The cries of the beaters sounded nearer. There was a crunching sound, a smashing-down of corn-stalks, a menacing snarl.

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"Wait!" screamed Tomasi. "*Silwane* comes, Mytata!"

As he spoke, a splendid black-maned lion sprang from the corn patch at Jim's right and crouched, head on ground between his massive paws, not ten yards from where Jim stood as one transfixed.

"Now is the time," said Jim, speaking slowly and distinctly, "for the young warriors to prove their mettle."

"Not they!" scoffed Tomasi, and his voice came from a height. Jim knew—he did not have to turn his head—that the old headman had climbed a tree. "Show us how you kill a lion with that fire-stick of yours," Tomasi's mocking voice continued, "or die. What need has such a mighty hunter of the spears of warriors?"

"No need," said Jim slowly.

He realized now that he had been trapped, that Tomasi had planned just this. What a fool he had been to boast of his prowess with the carbine!

The shouts of the beaters had stopped. Jim felt that every inhabitant of the valley was watching him.

The lion, its tail lashing savagely, was creeping nearer to him inch by inch, as a cat stalks a bird. A few more feet and——

Jim had two ways open to him. He could turn and make a dash for one of the orange trees with a bare chance of reaching its lower branches in safety. But if he did that—and lived—his name would be a byword. He would be treated with contempt, would be driven from the valley—forced to run the gantlet of all the men folk, and each one would strike at him with a sjambok. He would, perhaps, be killed. That way did not appeal to him.

On the other hand, if he stayed where he was, the lion would surely kill him; but he would die as a brave warrior should die, and his name would always be spoken of with reverence by the people of the valley. Such a death would not be a cause for mockery. Even the mightiest warriors, the craftiest hunters sometimes failed.

All this passed through Jim's mind with one short intake of the breath. In as short a time he reached a decision.

"The way to the Land of the Spirits," he muttered, "will not be lonely. My *baas* will join me very soon. Perhaps he will forget my folly, and we shall continue to hunt, as before, in the place of the shadows."

He slowly raised his carbine—that worthless weapon—to his shoulders, determined to carry out his pose to the end. Then, shutting his eyes, he waited.

The lion at that moment leaped. Just for one flickering second Jim opened his eyes and saw the tawny form in mid-air. He was dimly conscious of a loud report which seemed to come from behind him. Then the lion was upon him, and he went to the ground before the fearful impact—the beast on top of him.

Moments passed like hours. All was very still. It came to Jim that the lion was a dead weight upon him; it was singularly relaxed and motionless.

Something warm splashed on Jim's forehead. He cautiously opened his eyes and looked full into the face of the lion. Its eyes were glazed. Just above the bridge of its nose was a gaping hole from which the blood oozed, and Jim realized that a miracle had happened, that the lion was dead, that he, Mytata, one-time servant to the major, was a great hunter. With an effort he got from under the tawny carcass and rose to his feet—bruised but intensely happy.

With a swaggering gait he walked toward the trees where Tomasi, the other headmen and the warriors had taken refuge.

"Are you satisfied, doubters and men of little courage, that I am a mighty hunter?"

"Aye! Well satisfied," they answered in awed voices. "Never have we seen such slaying, such bravery."

"It was nothing—but do not doubt again."

The men climbed down from the trees, and the beaters hastened to the clearing and surveyed the lifeless jungle king.

They made a rough litter on which they put the carcass and then, loudly singing the praises of Mytata, all returned to the kraal, eager to celebrate the wondrous killing.

As for Jim, he was as one who treads on air.

BUT during the evening meal and during the drinking which followed he became strangely silent, and after a little while he went to his hut. There his wives quickly followed him.

"To-morrow you will be proclaimed chief, Mytata," said Mafuta.

"Aye," he assented wearily. "What of it?"

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"It is time that you selected your head wife."

"What care I who she is—so long as it is not that shrew, Mecabe? Chose between yourselves."

"The place belongs to me," said Mafuta.

"No! To me, fat cow!"

"You both lie—mine is the place," said Inyosi.

"And what of me?" shrieked Mecabe. "He calls me a shrew. Well, a shrew I will be."

"Oh, peace!" Jim groaned. "Or must I give order to have you beaten?"

But they paid no heed to him; instead, they advanced their claims in still louder voices, and soon the wordy warfare gave place to one of "tooth and nail." Several times Jim was the recipient of blows meant for one of the women, and at length, in fear for his life, he fled from the hut.

His appearance was greeted by the men of the kraal with good-humored raillery.

"What!" cried the warriors. "Does the killer of lions flee from his women?"

"May they be forever accursed!" replied Jim mournfully. "There is no peace where they are. What say, Tomasi? Can I not put them on one side when I am chief?"

"Have you forgotten the custom of the valley? Have you any just cause for putting them on one side?"

"Their voices are like the screams of the 'go-away' bird. They jabber incessantly; they are continually fighting—the one with the other. They give me no peace."

"That is no cause," said Tomasi.

The warriors laughed.

"That is the way of all women, O Mytata!" they cried.

Jim made no reply. He was looking with bewildered eyes at his hut, from which came the sound of women's voices raised in heated altercation.

"To live with them," he muttered, "is not to my liking. Rather would I have been killed by the lion."

And now came a warrior running.

"The white man!" he gasped. "The white man has gone, Mytata!"

"How could that be?" said Tomasi. "He was bound hand and foot; warriors were left to guard him."

"The warriors went to the hunt, O Tomasi! And as for the ropes which tied him—here they are!"

Everybody's Magazine, April, 1923

The man handed the charred sinews to Jim, who took them and examined them closely in order to cloak his feelings.

He was conscious of a great relief. The major, his *baas*, had escaped. He, Jim, would not have to see him die. But—what a fool he was! He had known long before the warrior came with the news that the major had escaped—had known it back in the clearing at the moment the lion charged.

He smiled happily; then his face clouded once more. He was conscious that he was unutterably lonely; he thought of the long years of stagnation, of inaction which were before him. He— But what was this Tomasi was saying? Ordering warriors to go on the trail of the white man!

"How now!" Jim shouted wrathfully. "Whose voice gives orders? By the fire-stick and the lion I killed, you go too far!"

"Your pardon, Great Hunter," the old headman replied humbly. "I thought that——"

"Do not think, gray-head," interposed Jim. "Bring hither the horse of the white man—or has that gone, too?"

"Nay, Mytata. It is in the cattle-kraal."

PRESENTLY a warrior led the black stallion, bridled and saddled, to where Jim waited impatiently.

"I go to find the white man," Jim announced, as he mounted the horse, "in order that the law of the valley may be fulfilled. Let no warrior follow the spoor. This is my *indaba*—is it understood?"

"It is understood, O Mytata! But how can you take the trail on the back of that black devil? The valley is in darkness."

"I am a hunter," boasted Jim. "I will find that white man though the valley were as dark as the country of the wicked dead. I shall not return without him."

"But if he kill you, what then?"

"Let Jhentsi be chief in my place if I do not return, and see to it that the lazy cows, my wives, are treated as becomes the widows of a dead chief. But have no fear. The killer of lions will not be killed by the white man."

He rode slowly away. Coming to the gate of the kraal, he turned in his saddle and shouted,

"*Shlahla gaghle*—remain in peace!"

"Aye!" They cried after him. "*Hamba gaghle*—may thy path be smooth!"

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He waited just a moment longer, then urged the horse to a gallop and was quickly swallowed up in the darkness of the night.

WHEN the major, his clothes and flesh torn by the *Wachenbitje* thorns, tired, bruised, hungry and sad at heart, came to his camp at the top of the kopje overlooking the valley, he was astonished to see a camp-fire burning brightly. Savory odors came to his nostrils. As he neared, a form sprang up from beside the fire and uttered one pregnant word:

"*Baas!*"

"Ah! Is it you, Mytata?" The major reeled for very weariness.

"Nay, *baas!* Not Mytata, but Jim."

"Jim?" The major laughed—a hollow laugh. "I once had a servant—closer to me than my shadow he was—named Jim. But he became a chief and forgot his *baas*."

Jim led the major to the fire and seated him in the camp-chair he had placed close by. He gently bathed his *baas's* cuts, removed his boots and gently rubbed the swollen ankles where the ropes had cut in.

"I am hungry," said the major. "I have not eaten since yesterday's sunup. I must get food." He rose from his chair, but Jim gently pushed him back.

"The food is ready, *baas*," he said, and brought him a plate of buck soup.

"Nay!" the major protested. "It is not seemly that Mytata, the chief, should wait on a white man."

"But Jim may, *baas*," the Hottentot pleaded.

The major flashed him one of his old-time looks.

"Yes—Jim may," he assented.

"I have been a fool," said Jim happily, as, with each spoonful of the soup, strength came back to the major.

"Yes, Jim?"

"Aye, *baas*—a very big fool. I thought that I would be happy having full authority over many people. I became puffed up with pride; I thought that my glory was greater than that of the sun."

"And is it not, Jim?"

"It is less than that of the firefly, *baas*. Does the *baas* feel stronger now?"

"Aye. All my strength has returned to me."

"Then take this, *baas*"—Jim handed the major a sjambok—"and beat me with it."

The major took it and, rising to his feet, raised his hand. Jim waited expectantly, but the blow did not fall. Instead, the major threw the sjambok to the ground.

"No! Not that, Jim. All is forgotten. To-morrow I go my way, and you—you shall return to your people. I will give you more goods—all that I have—and you shall be richer than any chief in the country."

"But I shall not return. I go with you, *baas*. The kraal is a fair place, but it is oversmall. The beer is impotent; the women folk are shrews—all of them. I have no place with the people of the valley. I go with you, *baas*. You know me for what I am—they sing my praises now because they think *I* killed the lion. But I know that but for you I would now be dead."

"It is not well to boast," commented the major. "You no doubt said that you were all powerful with the fire-stick?"

"Aye," Jim confessed. "They tested me—and because you were there, unseen, I seemed to prove my worth. That was a good shot, *baas*."

"Not bad," said the major in English. "Not half bad." Jim grinned. "And so, my dear old chap, you would renounce the pomp and ceremony of authority?"

"Aye, *baas*. Damn me—yes!"

"Having learned," the major continued, "that a gaily painted drum makes a deuce of a row but is quite empty."

"Empty—yah, *baas*."

The major felt in his tunic pocket for his monocle and exclaimed,

"Oh, what a bally nuisance!"

"What is it, *baas*?"

"We trek early to-morrow morning, Jim?"

"Yah, *baas*." Jim's face beamed.

"Yes—very early, Jim. I must get me a new monocle—a platinum-rimmed one, I think. They must be jolly topping."

"Golly, yes, *baas*."

"I'm going to sleep now, Jim. Good-night."

The major climbed up into the wagon and in a few minutes was fast asleep. But Jim sat by the camp-fire. Sleep was far from him—he was too happy.

"*Au-a!* What a man!" he ejaculated softly. "And I thought, like a fool, that much beer, my wives and the flattering tongues of men could take his place. *Au-a!* He is a man among men, and I—I am Jim, his servant."

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A Novel Complete in This Issue

The Moving Finger

Has the Word "Love" Become Too Much of a Commonplace? Is'n't It Too Big a Thing, as Grant Says, to Be Whipped About by Those Who Do Not Understand?

By Elizabeth Irons Folsom

Illustrations by Edward Volkman

SOMETHING more than wind and rain rattled the glass doors leading from Dr. Grant Holden's study to his veranda. Over the floor a shadow briefly swept—a glint of something white. The shadow slid to the second glass door. It, too, rattled lightly, then opened.

The girl halted just over the threshold. Water followed her in and made immediate trails that wandered and were dark under the gleam of fire on the hearth. She closed the door and leaned against it.

Across the big room Dr. Grant Holden was drowsing—feet stretched over footstool, book discarded and upside down. He slept on. The opening of the door did not disturb him.

She stepped forward. Fear, discomfort, hesitancy left suddenly with her first sight of him. She smiled, and a hundred different tendernesses came that curved her lips, lighted her eyes, colored her cheeks, smoothed her forehead, softened the very lines of her slight shoulders. She did not hesitate, nor did she respect his slumber. She crossed the room and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Grant!"

He looked up, got to his feet quickly.

"Claribel!" He looked beyond her. "Where is your mother?"

"Home."

"You are not here alone? Did she allow you to come here at this hour of the night?"

"She doesn't know. I ran away."

"Then you will run back at once."

"You don't want me here?"

"Of course I don't want you here at this hour! Do I want to compromise you or be compromised myself? I can't afford it—to say nothing of what you can afford."

"I must marry Dalton Strong if I do not come to you."

"Nonsense!" The word snapped.

"I must."

"Nonsense! That's folly—sentimental folly. Claribel, pick up your coat there and put it on. I'll drive you to the station—pleasant job in this storm!"

She backed away the length of the hearth-rug. The rain swept in a broad swish across the doors; some close branches swept with it, impelled by the wind that lashed and tore them. Far off a new roll of thunder came.

"You see," she said, with a wave of her hand. "You cannot send me out in this."

He looked at her and faint color crept into his face. He had often considered that Claribel True was like any other girl of young eighteen except for her coloring. Her satin-textured skin was a white—so white as to be dazzling—and a pink that both merged and glowed, ran into vivid color in her cheeks and lips, left her forehead a plane of the purest thing a masculine mind could conceive.

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To Dr. Grant Holden, twenty years older, known to many women, the girl was so enticing at that hour and in that environment that he glanced about the room as if looking for a solution less drastic. It was a big room. From one end curved the stairway; the other end was the fireplace. There were a few easy chairs, a broad couch, a table with books and papers—the matters that made him comfortable during the summer months in this retreat perched on the mountainside, its one dropping road going down three miles to the railway station.

"How did you get up here?"

"I walked."

"Walked!" He groaned. "Did any one see you?"

"I don't know. I don't think so. May I tell you about it without having my head snapped off? I won't eat you up if you will let me stay."

"You know you can't stay, my dear."

"Why not? I'm not afraid of you. And —and—we—love each other and some day are to be married."

He threw another log on the fire.

"What happened?" he said.

She was still standing, and as he looked down at her, that wonderful pink-white chin was trembling.

"I'm tired. I walked," she said, and the chin trembled more.

He put his arm across her shoulders.

"Sit down, silly!" he said.

He leaned over and put his cheek to hers. She turned her head so that her lips found his. For a moment they clung together. Then he stood up.

"Tell your foolish story, child."

"Mother lost a lot of money in that last speculation."

"I told her she would."

"Well, she has. And Aunt Florence wants to take her to Paris. She didn't want to take me, even if I had wanted to go. She says it's a wonderful chance to get in with papa's people—they don't care for mother much, but to be with Aunt Florence might impress them. She wants to go very much, but I seem to be awfully in the way. And when I come to you, you turn me out."

Her voice was plaintive, but she smiled. Her chin was tilting; her eyes were bright. He knew she was flaunting his apparent desire to turn her out.

"So she told me again that Mr. Strong wants to marry me."

"What did you say?"

"I said that you wanted to marry me."

"What did she say then?"

"She laughed. Laughed! Just as if you didn't! Then she said you had no money."

"Which is true enough, Claribel."

"As if I cared! Then she said, 'Dalton Strong can give you everything,' and then I— Do you remember what you told me once about him?"

"No."

"You said you couldn't decide whether he wanted mother or me. So I said, 'Why don't you take him, mother? It would be more suitable. He's about your age.' "

"And then——"

"Then she told me how well he would take care of me; how it would relieve her and what an expense I had been. I had never thought about it and—it hurt a little. And I said: 'No. Never Dalton Strong!' Because of you. It was quite a scene. So to-night, when I knew he was coming, I slipped out and came to you."

"I see you did."

He rose, fumbled about on the table and found a time-card.

"There is a train at quarter past eleven. Nice cheerful hour to be driving a girl to the station!"

SHE sank into his chair and held out a hand. He took it, again bent his lips to meet hers, again walked away and looked out of the window.

"The storm is passing. I can get you down. You will be home soon after midnight. There'll be a hell of a row, and you deserve it. Tell your mother, Claribel, that I sent you back. She'll hardly believe it of me. Of course she didn't dream of your being so foolish as to come to me."

"Why foolish to come to you? You are all I have."

"You are a little girl, Claribel. You should not be thinking of marrying any one. Your mother should take better care of you than to offer you to any man for years to come. Strong is a good sort. He's been straight as a string. Not a woman's man—him."

She was smiling faintly.

"Are you a woman's man?"

"Yes, I am."

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She laughed aloud and came to him, put both hands upon his shoulders.

"What do I care, dear—dear? You love me best?"

"Oh, yes. I love you best, all right."

"You don't act as if you did."

"I am acting exactly as if I did. I don't suppose you had dinner?"

"No; and I would like some."

"I'll see what I can find. It will be our first meal alone together. It may be our last—who knows?"

"Why do you say that? I don't think it is funny to say a thing like that."

"But if you are going to marry Dalton Strong——"

"You would like to tease me. Yes; our first meal alone. Dear me, how good-looking you are! See yourself. See us this way."

He followed her pointing finger to their reflection in the mirror over the fireplace. Her blond head was against his arm. He looked at his own reflection—tall, not as slight as he had been, a touch of not unbecoming gray about his forehead. His eyes were not tired-looking. He noted that, quick as he was to note how faces put on worsts and bests. He tightened his clasp about her.

"You are a sweet thing, Claribel. It's a pity that I am not some one else."

"Then you would not be loved by me."

"You use that word 'love' too glibly. You don't know what it means. You should not know. If I were a better man, I would lecture you about it, child, and tell you that it's a bigger thing than the way you whip it about, not understanding."

"I understand it."

"If you do—which you don't—I hope it will shape your life better than it has shaped mine."

"You suit me as you are. It's wonderful here. I wish I need not go back. When may I come to stay? Oh, that's a dreadful thing to ask! I should have waited for you to say that. But—when shall I come to stay, Grant?"

He did not answer.

"Let me bring what I can find to eat. We shall have time before we drive down."

HE CAME back laden with a tray of dishes and watched her as she ate. She was quivering with excitement. She did not know why—to her it was an adventure founded upon the rock of Propriety—he saw that. She scoffed at him, laughed with head thrown back. Once he started to catch her close and put his lips to the luscious throat so nearly offered him and that was his for the taking.

He liked to have her there—little Claribel. Hanged if he didn't! When they had eaten, he shunted the plates into the sink and wondered briefly what life would be like with a constant Claribel—a settling-down life. He told the plates confidentially that he was tired of his profession, though it never engrossed him much. Once he thought he would like to top all other specialists in his line. But it had been years since he had cared much. If he had wanted to, he could have had an office full of patients each day, could have made money—if money was the big thing in life. He wondered. But what was the use? To drive, to dig, to stay with one thing—that was for drudgers, not for him. He noticed that he was called in consultation when others failed. That was what he liked—to take life easy and work only when there was something difficult to be done. Then do it spectacularly, put others where they belonged. He was proud of his reputation to that extent. It amused him that, because he retreated from work, shut himself up with pleasure, people were eager to have him when desperate necessity rose. And he knew, too, that when necessity rose, he could meet it. As far as he knew, no one else so adjusted a profession, made it a servant to hand him honor and money when he was ready to take them. Therefore he enjoyed long vacations, either remote and dawdling or gay and reveling. As a result, he was younger than his years, without a tie to consider.

And he did not purpose assuming any tie which would be a nuisance after the first impetus of its possession had worn off. He liked the touch of Claribel True. She was the daintiest of living things. She had hit him harder than any other girl. He had told her so. Her color circled wonderfully when he said such words. Mercy, how luscious she was! And Dalton Strong, who was as old as he, was to have her. And Clarie had some sense, too, or would have after a while. Well, Strong would not stand much chance if he chose to speak to the girl in the next room.

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"Grant!" she called then.

He tingled at her voice. It matched the rest of her. Suppose he was working at his profession every day, had regular hours—and a silver voice saying "Grant!" as it had just spoken. Would that voice pay for the rest? Did sentimentality strike a man in the face after forty? Yes, it did. Which was stronger? He or sentiment? He was not sure.

HE WENT back into the other room. Yes; a big fireplace with Claribel on one side of it was a pleasant thing.

He sighed. She heard and sprang to him.

"Did I—really, did I bother you by coming here, dearest?"

"Yes, Clarie. You bothered—rather."

"I'm sorry. But what could I have done? What did you want me to do?"

"Be sensible."

She laughed and rubbed her cheek against his sleeve.

"Such as—what way?"

"Such as getting down to facts—to reason."

She murmured acquiescently, not interested. He sat down and drew her to the arm of his chair.

"Your mother is going away with Aunt Florence?"

"She wants to."

"If she wants to, she will. That's her history."

"Is it?"

"And Dalton Strong is looking for a wife? He is a very rich man, Claribel."

"Who cares?"

"And a very good man."

She was drawing a line with a forefinger down his forehead and the bridge of his nose. The operation was engrossing.

"It would be a safe-and-sane proposition to be Mrs. Dalton Strong." No answer. No interest. He caught the operating hand. "Claribel, listen! If your mother goes away, where will she leave you?"

How the rose-color ran—came and went—came to stay! He looked away from it.

"I—I'll wait for you. I can do something. I—I'll get along till you are ready." He was silent. "Grant, you don't mind my asking, do you? I don't mean anything by it, but when—do you suppose—when should you think that I—that you—that I could come to you?"

"I don't know."

"No; of course not. You are not rich. Maybe I seem like an undertaking. Do I? Like taking on a big job? I wouldn't be. I don't want much. I don't need these things"—she lifted a fold of her soft silk gown and dropped it. "I'll do with—oh, just anything. I never would be a burden about asking or teasing. I wouldn't be."

He did not look up.

"Claribel, I hate to have you depend upon me so much."

"I love to depend upon you. Why do you hate it?"

"Because—well, you make me brutally frank, Clarie. I really am not a marrying man, you know."

"How do you mean?"

"I mean I am not cut out for that. I have been free too long. I"—he caught her as she rose—"I love you very much, my dear——"

"Do you mean you do not want to marry me?"

"I mean that it would be folly to think of it."

"Oh! You have not meant what you said, then."

"I love you. But marriage—Claribel, dear, that is for other men."

She put out a stiff, straight arm against his breast as he came close to her.

"And all that you said about our future together and our home—you did not mean that?"

"Well, not as you took it, quite——"

"You did not ever intend to marry me. Is that it?"

"I never intend to marry any one. If I were to marry any one, it would be you, but——"

She stooped and picked up her cloak from the floor and looked at him across the bundle that it made in her arms.

"You did not mean it," she repeated. "It's odd—isn't it?—that you could have done that."

"Now, now," he said nervously, "take it the right way. I shall always love you the best in the world. It's a great sorrow and a great sacrifice. It's a killing thing to say this to you." For the moment he felt that it *was* a killing thing.

"Then, if that is true, I don't wonder you were surprised to have me come here. You see, I supposed you meant what you

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said. No—let me alone. I'm not going to make a fuss."

"Wait!" For she had thrown her cloak about her without putting her arms into the sleeves. "Wait! I'll get the car. I'll drive you down. Clarie, you—you don't take this as I thought you would. I—you should understand better. Wait—will you wait until I get the car?"

She nodded—the same little quick movement that she always made. He felt relieved; she was going to be sensible. She was not quite smiling, but made no fuss. Fine girl! He had seen them make scenes.

"Just a minute, Clarie. And we'll talk it over on the way down. You'll quite understand me. I knew you would. Just wait."

He tore at the car when he reached the garage. The storm was coming back; new wind whipped, and a great zigzag spiked into the forest, close. The thunder lingered and then came. He looked to see that the side curtains were tight.

The door stood open as he drove round to it. He called. Then he sprang out and ran into the big room. Quite still. And quite empty.

"Claribel!" he called. "Claribel!"

He called many times. There was no sign or sound.

MRS. TRUE had faced Claribel's empty room with a mixture of emotions. Chief among them was irritation. It was provoking to have Dalton Strong waiting down-stairs with an extra amount of interest and enthusiasm, and be required to explain why her daughter was not at home.

There were a dozen places where Claribel might be. Mrs. True set her young mouth in a foreboding way and wondered what sort of tale would go best with the waiting man.

She descended the narrow stairs slowly. Dalton Strong rose and waited for her. He was punctilious—Claribel said that the only thing she really liked about him was his store of courtesies, working automatically, giving him a presence that his slight, grayish person might not have achieved.

This man of forty was the moneyed man of the town. He had grayish skin, gray hair, eyes that cut into the negativeness of him with their whimsical light. It was by their humor and friendliness that their owner was more than a thinnish, mousy man, whose chief recommendation was money. Dalton Strong had a sense of humor—a reserved, unshowy sense. He told a story badly, but he heard one beautifully. Twinkles came out early about his bright-gray eyes. He had a good smile.

But on the question of money Dalton Strong was adamant. Play golf with him, meet him on a social platform or a business one that did not touch him personally, and he was lighted and companionable. Speak of money, and all lights were out—there was nothing to show the way.

Mrs. True ran gaily down the last few steps.

"I had forgotten that Tony Ferbush asked Claribel to come over and help with decorations for the Hallowe'en party at the country club." (Which was not true.) "I supposed she was in her room." (Which was true.) "But she is not back. Shall I—shall I telephone for her, or don't you mind?"

"I don't mind at all, Anna. Let the young folks play. It's comfortable here."

Mrs. True caught her breath quickly. It had been her covered-up hope that sometime Dalton Strong, long-time friend, might want to marry her. It would have been quite the suitable thing to take her daughter and go to Dalton's big house to be his very capable and appreciating wife. She had believed it would work out that way ultimately. Then, out of a remarkably clear and promising sky, had come the knowledge that it was Claribel he wanted. Never, to her dying day, would she forget the moment in which she had realized it. He had told her very suddenly that—well, the usual thing—time-worn love-words, entangling Claribel, not her. She had clutched the arm of her chair, torn quite a chunk out of her chiffon gown, put on because he was coming. He had not noticed. He was engrossed with himself and the girl who had caught a never-before-caught fancy. The girl he had helped raise! Absurd! And she could not say so, for the big house round the corner, the wealth that would come tied her tongue. Then and there she buried herself—pretty, straight figure, shining hair, which had but a bit of gray, complexion that had responded to careful care. There was still not a day but she wondered why the immature, uncertain, irregular charm of her daughter had caught a love that she

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herself would have tended so very carefully —if she had received it. And why had she not received it? She did not look a day over thirty-five, and could look even younger if Dalton's money could unravel her financial tangles.

He struck a match, blew it out and replaced the cigar carefully in its case.

"Anna, I believe I will speak to Claribel. I have waited three months. If she is not going to take me, I might as well know it. She doesn't care for any of the young fellows, does she?"

"No. Claribel is young for her age. She hasn't thought of matrimony at all yet. She would have told me. We are awfully good chums, you know." (They were not.)

"I know. But you spoke to her?"

"Yes. I told her. She is an odd girl. You may have your hands full, Dalton."

"I'll chance it." He said this very low, and she looked at him curiously. Queer! A man like him, and in his voice there had been romance. She ground one high heel into the rug. Claribel! Who didn't know or care!

He was speaking.

"I haven't liked Dr. Holden hanging round her."

"Oh, nonsense, Dalton!"

"I don't know. I saw them together one night at the club—on the veranda. She was like a light—I never saw her just that way. I don't like his record. It's none of my business except when it touches her. You should have stopped that acquaintance, Anna."

"And thrown her straight at him by objecting? Allow me to know best about girls, Dalton—having one, and having been one not so long ago." Her voice was wistful. "She doesn't care about him—flattered, maybe, because he is older."

"I should be old enough to suit her. I never before hated my years—never considered them. But I shall speak to her—unless you think I'd better not."

"Oh, no! Go ahead, if you like."

He gave her a glance.

"You are not keen for it."

"Yes; I am keen for it. Why should I not be? She will be safe and taken care of. She will never have the struggle that I have had to keep her head above the tradespeople. Did I tell you that my last investment turned out wrong?"

"No. Did it?"

His eyelids were half down. He was just a grayish man surrounded by a blur. He had retreated into his money-shell.

She sighed.

"Don't get the idea that I don't want you to have her. I do. She will be a beautiful woman—a credit to you, Dalton."

The door-bell rang, long and giddily.

BEFORE Mrs. True had reached the door it came open, and a tall girl swept in, head up, assurance in every movement.

"Oh—Tony!" said Mrs. True, color rising under the emergency. "Where is Claribel? She went to your house."

Antoinette Ferbush swept the speaker with her very blue eyes; they went on to Dalton, who had risen; they returned to Mrs. True, gathered up her confusion, his interest, Claribel's absence.

"I left her hard at work with tissue-paper and came over to get more from her room. I can't spare her yet."

She shook hands with Mr. Strong. Mrs. True watched her. Had Miss Ferbush lied? She was awfully clever—Antoinette Ferbush. Had Claribel done some foolish thing, and did Tony know?

The visitor sat down smilingly, crossed her long, slim feet, loosened her red coat—Miss Ferbush affected high colors.

"How are the decorations getting on?" Mrs. True was still watching. Whether Tony had something to tell and whether she could trust her to tell it judiciously, she was not sure. She had not too much faith in Antoinette. If Tony could help herself by telling anything unpleasant about Claribel, she might do it. One could never tell which way Tony would jump.

"The decorations are no longer first in my mind," she answered. "Just to-day I have become an heiress. Uncle Jasper was so good as to be run over by an automobile."

"Oh!" said Mrs. True, in a sympathetic run of voice. "How shocking!"

"Well, as I never saw Uncle Jasper, my grief is tempered. The only message I ever had from him was a refusal to advance one hundred dollars when I especially needed it. His executor is more gracious. He writes that five thousand dollars is waiting my order."

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Mrs. True decided that Tony knew something about Claribel, but that she was not going to tell it. She was killing time until Dalton Strong should go. So she said:

"What shall you do with the money? Have they sent it?"

"Not yet. But there is nothing to prevent making selections."

"Better invest it, Antoinette," said Mr. Strong.

"Never!" replied Miss Ferbush firmly. "What would that give me? Nothing."

"It would give you something if an emergency should arise."

"They arise constantly. They are always at hand. Six per cent. of five thousand would not touch any of my kind of emergencies. Not once in my life—and I shall be thirty next week—have I had what I needed all at one time. If my shoes were right, my gloves were wrong; if they were proper, then my hat was a disgrace, or my coat was three years old, or my tailored suit could not go out by day. For once I am going to have just what I want."

"You are foolish," said Dalton Strong.

"Of course I am. That is what money is for—to be foolish with. That is what life is for—to be foolish in."

Mr. Strong got up.

"Oh, don't go, Dalton! Tony—er—how soon will Claribel be home?"

"Not soon. We're very busy."

"Will you come again, Dalton?" asked Mrs. True. "I am sorry about Claribel; but you see how it is."

When the front door closed, the two women faced each other.

"Is she with you?"

"No; I haven't seen her. You didn't want him to know."

"Of course not! She isn't in her room. I can't imagine—she's deathly afraid to be out after dark."

"Where do you suppose she has gone? Did you telephone any likely place?"

"I couldn't. He was here. I had to say something right away, and I said she was with you. You were clever to back me up so quickly."

"Not at all clever. Your eyes were as big as saucers. The way you said, 'Oh, Tony!' put a search-light over what had happened. I hope I know enough to follow a plain lead. There are a dozen places where she might be. Shall I telephone?"

Mrs. True sat down uncertainly and listened to Tony's voice making inquiries. She was not yet anxious about Claribel—just annoyed. She wished Miss Ferbush were not there. She suspected that Tony wanted Dalton Strong herself, and Tony was shrewd—too shrewd. Tony lived more or less by her wits. She had her own bachelor apartment, taught French to beginners in the public schools—taught it fiercely, reluctantly—loathing it bitterly. She eked out her salary with inaccurate drawings alleged to be suitable for magazine covers and once in a while really sold for that purpose. Tony affected bright smocks; her blond hair blew about a great deal; never had Mrs. True before heard her mention her age.

Tony came back from the telephone.

"She is not anywhere, so far as I can find. Can you think of any other place?"

"Will people wonder because we have telephoned so much?"

"Yes. But can you just ignore her absence?"

"No."

"Was there any reason for her to run off like this?"

"No." Mrs. True did not purpose telling just yet that Dalton Strong had asked for Claribel. It had better be definitely fixed before the word was entrusted to Tony.

They sat silently. The clock struck again. They waited. Once Mrs. True spoke.

"Was it true about Uncle Jasper?"

"Yes—thank heaven!" And they were silent again.

Suddenly Mrs. True got up.

"I'm getting nervous. What do you suppose she means? It's late. In another half-hour I am going to be frightened."

She *was* frightened in another half-hour, when nothing had happened.

"It's very late, Tony. What can we do?"

Tony went to the window just as a big car tore down the street and came to a quick stop. A man sprang from it and ran up the steps. The two women started at the peal of the bell.

"Grant Holden! I thought so," said Tony Ferbush.

WHEN Dr. Holden found no trace of Claribel at the station, something akin to panic seized him. He waited a while on the platform—rain plashing the mountain road streaking across the narrow

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wet valley to ascend among rocks and chasms to where he had lost Claribel. He watched the road with the feeling that she might at any moment appear along it. Then he got into his car and drove slowly back until it occurred to him that she might have been picked up by some motor going to town. Any one would pick up a girl walking alone at that hour.

But he must know for a certainty. Clearly he must take his medicine—and a bitter dose, too—by going to her home. "Damn!" He said it meaningly. A fuss. If there was anything he hated, it was a fuss. Why couldn't he have sense enough to let young girls alone? Without judgment or experience, they always made trouble. His own fault! Let him go to it.

He turned his car about and started on the twenty-mile drive to town. His anxiety cleared away as he neared her home. She was there, of course. He felt rather as if he were doing a commendable thing to put himself in the awkward position that was waiting for him.

THERE was a light in the house, and it was then that Antoinette Ferbush saw him from the window. Mrs. True opened the door.

"What has happened? Is it Claribel?"

"Is she home?"

Mrs. True hesitated.

"What do you mean by asking that?"

"Oh—she is here," he said, much relieved. "Then I beg your pardon for rushing in like this." Then he knew that Claribel was not there. "She is not home." He made this as a statement, not a question. He stepped inside and closed the door. "I'm in an awful position, Mrs. True. Let me be frank with you. Claribel is not at home?"

"No."

"She—she came to me."

"Came to you where?"

"To my house in the mountains. Early to-night."

"Where is she now?"

"I don't know. I went for the car to bring her home and she disappeared."

"Came to you—there!" It was not flattering to him—the horror in her voice. "Why couldn't you have left the child alone? There are enough women to entertain you without taking a child. Came to you! You had told her to, of course."

"I had not told her to. I was as shocked as you are. I would have brought her back at once, but it was raining hard—we waited for the storm to pass." She put both hands over her face. "Mrs. True," he said, with dignity, "I hope you believe that she was safe with me."

"Then she is the first girl ever safe with you. How long has this been going on?"

"What?"

"This meeting you."

"It has not gone on at all. You have no right to put that implication upon her. It seems to be more important to you than finding her."

"It *is* more important," said Anna True dully.

She turned to the rack, took down a coat and fumbled with it. He helped her put it on.

"You want to go back with me?"

"Of course."

"Don't you think she will come home?"

"In her place, I would not come home."

He held her back from opening the door.

"Look here! You are taking the wrong view of this. It was just a girl's folly—a freak. There was nothing planned about it."

"Do you expect me to believe that?"

"Yes; I expect you to believe it."

"Not at my age, with my knowledge of life and my knowledge of you. It's a wicked, wicked thing! All her life I have worked and hoped for her. Prayed—if I ever pray at all—that she might make us both happy. Now that hope is gone."

"I tell you it was a freak that she will forget."

"I know better. She would not have gone without a reason."

"She had what she thought a reason."

"What?"

"That you were insisting upon her marrying Dalton Strong."

"Dalton Strong." She repeated the name slowly as if she liked the sound. "I wanted her safe. I suppose there is no crime in wanting one's daughter safe. Yes; I wanted her to marry him. Now that hope is gone, too."

"There is no reason why she should not marry him—no more reason to-day than yesterday. This will not be known——"

"Do you think it can be kept quiet?"

"I am sure so—if you don't lose your head and be foolish."

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"He would have to know."

"Know what? A prank of a silly girl? No; the first thing is to find her. Get her home, and then who will tell? Not you. Not Claribel. Not I. My dear Mrs. True, don't look like that. She can't be in danger. She was piqued and has hidden somewhere. You had better stay here, for she will surely come. I will go back over the road again. Don't be foolish. You stay here, won't you?"

"No; I must go with you. You might be seen together at this hour. I must go."

He held open the door without further word. He was seething inside with unpleasant emotions. He might have added one more if he had known that, silent, within hearing, Antoinette Ferbush was drawing conclusions

CLARIBEL ran from Dr. Holden's house with no clear reason back of the act. It was not fear, not hurt pride—just the desire to be away when he came back with the motor—just not to hear his voice. Instantly, when he had told her that he did not intend to marry her, she had known that she should make, as she had said, no "fuss." He had jilted other girls. Else he could not have done it so skilfully. Was there a dignity that might go with jilting—for the jilted one?

The white road curved away from the door, dipped down and was gone among the trees. She was in their shadow before the first lightning of the returning storm flamed. It was a stiff down-hill, and she took it as eighteen takes things, sure-footed, careless-eyed. Claribel was afraid of the dark, but she was not afraid of this dark. Down—down—a sort of skipping-race, an orgy of hurry, the wet wind slapping her face.

The curving road did not take her so far from the house but that she heard his voice, the wrench of the motor-brake.

She left the road at the same pace and brought up short against barbed wire. She dropped to the ground and rolled under the wire fence. The barbs caught her cloak; she heard it tear. She rolled on. The ground dropped away and she went down where it was soft and moist. She lay still and heard the car come.

"Claribel! Clarie!" There was anxiety—and a lot of it—in his voice. She was glad of it. She hoped he might feel other emotions harder to bear than anxiety. The car moved on. "Claribel! Clarie!" His voice reached her again.

Presently he stopped the car, and she heard his footsteps and his voice again and again calling her name. It was like the hide-and-seek of not so many years back. Was it possible that it was ever fun to play it? She was excited. Her heart pounded.

His voice passed, going toward the house. He was going back to look for her there. She waited. The dampness had become wetness; it was running in trickles across her ankles, soaking through her clothes about her hips and shoulders. The wind was swishing the trees, and some sharp drops were falling. Well, she could not be much wetter if it rained, and what did it matter? Her mother would complain about her clothes. It was a sudden, startling thing to remember her mother and all that went with her—reasonable things, unlike lying in puddles. Her mother? Oh, yes; her mother. Well, she would consider her later.

She heard him come down the road again, this time with a pocket flash-light. She wondered if it would show any piece of cloth torn by the barbed wire from her cloak.

She grew hysterical as he went up and down the road. It was absurd to be hunted with a pocket flash-light. She lay tighter into the ooze and hoped he would go soon.

When he stopped calling her name and she saw the motor-lights change position, scrape the country farther on, grow faint, disappear, she realized that he had gone on to the railway station, expecting to overtake her.

She crawled up over the bank, found the fence again, rolled under it and stood up in the road. She was cold. Her soaked skirts slapped her ankles. The rain was falling steadily—not with gusts or heady spurts that would pass but as if there were worlds of wetness to be poured down and the job must be steadily done. She could not see a foot ahead of her except when the lightning flashed. She must not be found when daylight came—draggled, a jilted person indeed. She could fancy how he would compare her with other girls to whom he had told the same story—those other girls who knew that he was not a marrying man—as if marrying were a profession to be studied and advanced upon.

She plodded ahead. All her lightness was gone. She went down the grade with heels

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dug in, stumbled over loose stones. Any old, old person would have gone down-hill like that. And all the time she was saying over to herself the word "dignity." She thought of it as the level-eyed, firm-chinned ability to show Dr. Holden that she had not gone under because he did not want her.

There was nothing to do but go home. Anything else would advertise that Dr. Holden had thrown her over. She supposed that people knew she was in love with him. She had not taken any trouble to conceal it. He had not taken any trouble, either, to conceal his love for her—a love that traveled about from girl to girl and carried as its baggage the phrase: "Not a marrying man."

She stopped to put wet strands of hair out of her eyes. So still. Nothing but the dropping of the rain, the faint talking of a brook somewhere. And she was not afraid, alone like this. Was it because she was so hurt inside—a hurt that she had not allowed herself to consider?

A sound of movement put her heart into her throat. Yes—movement. She heard it surely. Something that swished among the leaves, cracked in the brush. Closer. She backed against the wire fence and clasped her arms about a post. She could hardly breathe. Something. Closer and closer. No use to scream. Nothing to scream to. Perhaps it would pass by if she were quite still. She took her hands from the post to clasp them over her mouth. Something leaped in the dark; she heard the impact against the ground, a sniff, hard breathing. Then she could distinguish a white spot that came close.

If there was anything that Claribel was not afraid of, it was a dog. They always understood. She spoke to him. It was his own language, and he answered. She put her hand down to meet his head. One could always depend upon dogs. He nuzzled her wet skirts, sniffed her waist, poked his nose into her hand.

A whistle sounded from far off and he flung up his head, listened, dropped away and went over the fence beside her. She turned to look, and away off among the trees there was a faint twinkle of light. The whistle came again and a voice calling. It was a woman's voice.

Suddenly the dark stretch of road was peopled with dangers. Fear clutched her. The voice of a woman meant comfort, warmth, protection. The voice of a woman! Any woman! There was security where that voice was.

She ran for the light. She began to cry as she ran—aloud, softly—and how it hurt! From her heart, where she had been struck, from the fears she had fenced away, from the big loneliness, the hurts came. She ran. She could see the waving white tassel of a tail ahead of her—a dog and a woman! Could one want more?

THE door of the house stood open. Inside, a kerosene-lamp shone. There was a couch under a window, a table and chairs, some bits of bright tinware. A woman raised herself from the couch.

"Who is it?" she demanded.

"It's just a girl," Claribel answered, as she reached the open door. "It's just a girl."

The woman stood up. One arm lay in a rude bandage, and the other hand held to it. Her face was twisted with pain.

"There's nobody here. I'm alone. I've broke my arm."

"Oh!" said Claribel, moved by the woman's blanched face. "What can I do? Doesn't it hurt a great deal?"

"Done two days ago," said the woman. "It's bad. I tell ye it's bad."

"Two days! Why didn't some one go for a doctor?"

"There's nobody t' go."

"You are alone?"

"Yes; I'm alone. Ben alone long time, young lady."

Claribel looked at her. Her voice was soft and thick, slurred its consonants. Her head was twisted over with dark hair untidily grayed. Her eyes were big and brown, with circles under them that ran down to her cheek-bones like dark-blue swathes, more of them striking down from nose to mouth. Her pose would have been stately but that her body was held askew from pain. She must have been unusually beautiful some time, Claribel thought, forgetting herself for the moment.

"I'm very gentle in touching anything," she said. "May I look at it and make the bandage better for you? I'll be very careful."

The woman submitted, with her eyes upon the girl. She watched her curiously, suspiciously.

Claribel loosened the sling and untied the

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bandage which the woman had put on with an awkward left hand.

The arm was swollen. As it was lifted to remove the bandage, the woman groaned —held back a scream. But she sat erect, and a tiny drop of blood came from under the teeth on her lower lip.

Claribel laid the injured arm on a pillow. There was blood on it; the skin was broken where the bone had come through.

"I tried to push the bone back," said the woman, and another blood-drop crept down from her lip.

"I hardly dare touch it, but I know I can put on a better bandage. Where can I find some cloths?"

THE woman nodded toward a chest of drawers, and in it Claribel found some undergarments, very soft, with fine lace about them.

"These are too good to tear up."

"Tear 'em."

Claribel tore them and, bringing water, washed the swollen, fevered flesh.

"How did you do it?" she asked as she worked.

"Fell down the stairs. Night before last."

"And you have let it go so long! I must get some one for you right away."

She had forgotten why she was there. The woman's eyes traveled over the wet modish frock.

"What ye doin' up here?" she asked roughly.

Claribel did not answer. She made some smooth bandages and deftly wrapped them about the wounded arm; she fashioned a broad sling and guided the arm into it. The woman sighed.

"It feels better. It hurt so bad. I couldn't do nothin' m'self, I was that hurt."

"Of course you couldn't! Now, how do I get a doctor?"

"Ye don't. Ye need t'be looked after yerse'f. Ye're wet t'the hide. What's a baby like you doin' out in the night? Where ye ben?"

Claribel's hands went up to her face. A woman demanding of her in a stern voice, "Where ye ben?" She did not think of refusing to tell.

"Oh!" she said, hesitating, feeling hot under the straight gaze. "I—must get to the station. I—do not know about the trains—or anything."

"A baby like you!" repeated the woman. "Where ye ben—up in this mountain this time o' night? Where ye ben?" Claribel shrank from her eyes that held accusation. "Oh—ye ben t' the house on the hill, eh? Ye're one o' them, then. A baby like you! Ain't ye got no mother t' watch ye?"

"I'm not one of—them. I—I came up here just to-night. Just two or three hours ago."

The woman laughed.

"Two or three hours!" She put such scorn in her words that Claribel caught their meaning, if only vaguely. "Did ye come alone?"

"Yes."

The woman laughed again. She nursed her arm close to her and laughed over it at Claribel. Her eyes were narrowed; her upper lip lifted. She was horrid, and yet she must have been——

"Then why are ye alone? He gener'ly takes 'em back comfortable."

"I—I ran away." Claribel was eager, wanting to put away the smiling stare, to turn the smile to something else.

The woman leaned forward over her arm.

"I hope ye run away in time, young baby. God Almighty! What risks a girl takes with a man like him!"

"He—" said Claribel, not understanding of what Dr. Holden was accused, "he—he did not know I was coming."

The woman lifted her well arm high.

"No. He didn't know ye was a-comin'! He just made it so's ye couldn't keep away. Then he—what'd he do? Ye tell. Mebbe ye got some one back o' ye. Mebbe ye stood a chanct because o' that. Oh, I know. Have I lived here thirty year, an' him yonder sence I was a girl? Do I know?"

"What do you know?" asked Claribel slowly. She looked straight at the woman, her eyes very wide open.

The woman tossed her head fiercely.

"I know him, an' I knowed his fam'ly fore an' aft."

"Up here?"

"Here—yes. His mother was a lady—one o' them soft-spoke, gentle kind. That's where he gets it—his way o' draggin' folks to him. He come honest by it. Ye never could tell what she meant by what she said. Nor kin ye him. But he's most like his father—in looks and actin'—so's the mother's life wa'nt no bed o' roses."

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She leaned forward. It seemed to Claribel that she had been long without talking. It was like a boiling from under a carefully kept cover—this desire for speech that overflowed.

"We growed up," she went on, clasping her bandaged arm and rocking herself back and forth on the couch-edge. "We tore round here as childern, Grantie Holden an' me. There was somethin' wrong with the father. Pa uset t' say so. Somethin' that kep' folks from 'sociatin' with 'em much. They kep' t' theirselves. But they wa'nt like us mountain folks. They was diffr'nt—no matter what the reason."

CLARIBEL was beginning to wonder. The woman talked so loud. Her face was flushed; she breathed hard. Was it because of the neglected arm? Could it be fever that tangled her speech, made it profuse, that kept the fingers of her well hand moving back and forth? She went on:

"Name is Dry. Jennie Dry. Ma went t' the big house. She was friend t' the missus there. Pa went, too. An' I went. I never went none after he come home from school. No; I never went after that. Not often. I never went—much. They died suddent—both his father an' mother—clost t'gether. I never went after that. Not so—much——"

Claribel went to the swaying woman and put her hand on her forehead. It was burning. Color had mounted as she talked. It was fever. Claribel was sure of it.

"An' God knows," said the woman, still swaying, "that the mountain's a still place. Pa died an' ma died. Seemed like the world was jest t' die in. I never mingled much. Ye see, I hadn't no education, but, young baby, I wanted t' know the folks who had it. Not my kind. The other kind. An' I says t' you at yer age, where I was onct, stick t' yer kind. Yes; I was awful young m'se'f an' not knowin'. It's queer that so clost t' the cities we could be so alone. There ain't a woman on the mountains who wanted t' be a friend t' me. Queer how some folks can't catch up friends! Jest gets in the way o' doin' without. Years! Years! It's queer."

She moaned. Claribel was disturbed, distressed. The collie was distressed, too. He understood there was something wrong, for he put a big paw up and shoved her gently.

"Get on, Rusty," she mumbled, still rocking.

But he did not get on. He sat erect and told Claribel as plainly as speech that matters had gone far. His great brown eyes asked her what they should do about it.

"Miss Dry—listen—where is the nearest house?"

Jennie Dry raised her eyes. She understood.

"His."

"Except his. Isn't there a house near?"

"No."

Claribel knew that if she were to get home that night she must start soon. But how could she leave Jennie Dry in her present condition? Even if she could send some one back from the station—and whom could she send? To wait and send some one from town might be too late. Already Jennie was mumbling again, and swinging back and forth; still Rusty asked his question.

Could she get Jennie to a physician or a hospital? Clearly the sensible thing would be to go back and send Dr. Holden down. She burned at the thought.

"Will you try and walk with me to the station, where we can get some one to take care of your arm?"

Jennie frowned.

"Arm's better."

"It can't be better until it is taken care of."

"Arm's better."

Claribel took hold of her.

"Listen; will you try to go with me? I can't leave you. You'll die if I do."

"They all die."

"But not you, now. You are too big and strong. But you will be very sick if you don't come with me—very sick and uncomfortable."

Jennie Dry looked into Claribel's face. She seemed to make an effort to understand.

"Poor little thing!" she said, as she looked.

Claribel's tears were close. But it was no time to cry. She pulled Jennie Dry to her feet. The woman groaned and grasped at her side, and she did not stand erect. That was why she breathed oddly, because of an injury more desperate, perhaps, than the broken arm.

"Try and walk. You can. You must! Help me get home. It's awfully wet, and I ought to have some dry clothes."

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But when, at the club, she saw Claribel come slowly down, a smile came. Why, the child was distinctive! Every one was looking at her.

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"Yes, young baby; ye'd ought. What is it ye want o' me?"

"For you to take me home."

"I'll take ye home, o' course. I'll take ye, young baby. Then will ye stay home? Never—never come here again?"

"Never—never!" Claribel could hardly speak—so many aches inside and out. So many!

She found a hat and coat—folded the coat carefully over the broken arm. Rusty circled them and told Claribel that she had his backing as far as she could make it useful.

The effort of moving had, in a measure, restored Jennie Dry's consciousness, and she tried pitifully hard to take the lead, to show the short-cut path, to clear a way through the brush. The uninjured hand, to which Claribel clung, was wet with the sweat of agony; the fingers were taut. Once Claribel said,

"Is it your arm or your side hurts worst?"

"Side," said Jennie Dry, and pushed on.

The rain had stopped, but the roads were slippery and wet. Rusty led the way, and as they reached the platform, the whistle sounded.

During the short ride, Claribel rehearsed her suddenly matured plans. Dr. Hankins' hospital was not far from her home. He was a friend of—well, of Dr. Grant Holden, a far-away person who was later to come into his share of her thoughts but who just then must wait. Heartaches are one thing; broken arms another. She would have it out with herself later.

The ride from train to hospital was the hardest part. Jennie had fallen against her. Her heavy head lay in Claribel's neck; she had ceased to guard her arm, and it lay doubled beside her. She moaned constantly, and Rusty, hunched in the corner of the cab, was no longer friendly—his eyes turned from one to the other—accusing Claribel, puzzled as to what the cramped ride meant.

Claribel waited an hour outside Jennie's door until Dr. Hankins came out. She clutched his arm.

"I wish you'd watch her yourself. She—she—" Claribel was wearing under the strain; self-consciousness was stealing back before this doctor to whom one told the truth.

"Who is the woman, Claribel?"

"She is from the mountains about Layton Station."

Dr. Hankins knew as well as she did who lived near Layton Station.

It would have been easier if he had said something. He was just grave, and went to the cab with her without speaking. Rusty was waiting, much concerned. Claribel hesitated and looked at him; he was expectant.

"Get in, Rusty," she said, and he hopped in as if that were his daily custom. Still, Dr. Hankins did not speak. Waking a man out of his first sleep did not leave him talkative, Claribel decided.

A motor stood at her own curb. She went up the steps with her gaze upon it. Her mother opened the door. Beyond her, his coat collar up, his whole appearance unlike himself, stood Dr. Grant Holden.

"Come in, Rusty," said Claribel.

Dr. Holden looked from her to the dog—back to her, again to the dog. He knew him, of course. Claribel had a mad desire to laugh. What was he thinking in that second's pause? What was he wondering—or fearing? Was he fearing anything?

"Claribel!" Her mother's voice held many things that the girl did not want just then. She flung out one hand.

"Just don't talk to me to-night, mamma, please! Let me alone to-night."

Her mother stepped aside, and Claribel went up the stairs, Rusty padding unchallenged behind her. In her own room, she closed and locked the door. She had not behaved well. She should have done differently, should have said, "Good-night, Dr. Holden" very casually, instead of looking away and coming up-stairs. Why couldn't she have shown that she was not hurt?

Then, without taking off her coat, she lay upon her bed, face down. The lights streamed on unnoticed, and Rusty, puzzled and wakeful, lay across the door.

CLARIBEL came down the stairs alone. She was not, for the time, on good terms with her mother. There had been an encounter concerning Claribel's gown for the Hallowe'en country-club party. It had been finished that afternoon and spread out upon her bed in diaphanous fluffiness and festoonment of yellow chiffon and scarlet poppies.

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"It looks like a lamp-shade," Claribel had said coldly. Her mother had passed over the remark as she had passed over other remarks during the last few days. She had decided to let the girl alone concerning her return home in early-morning hours to confront Dr. Holden and herself, to let her alone as far as possible in all matters.

So she passed over Claribel's fling at the lamp-shade ball gown. She did not even slam the door as she went out, but she shoved a couple of tears back into her eyes with her handkerchief. Oh, it was hard—hard! The gown had cost too much. Everything cost too much; she didn't know what she should do unless Claribel married Dalton Strong. The bills—piles of them. She dreamed of them, woke up in the night to think of them. Claribel could change all that if she would. She had better give her a free hand.

But when her daughter came from her room, she stared at her, aghast. The gown she and Miss Stanger had labored over! The girdle of poppies which had flamed against the yellow chiffon was gone; Claribel had cut away the poppy wreath about the shoulders, the ruffles, the festooning flounce.

They were waiting for her—her mother, Dalton Strong and Tony Ferbush, who had come over to go with them.

They stared at her—all of them.

Tony broke the silence.

"You look like a yellow candle," she said.

Perhaps that *was* what she looked like. The yellow frock was just a sheathing for her slim, straight figure; it lay against the whiteness of her throat and breast just as a filmy covering. It fell straight and clinging, just not quite too thin to be possible; it ended irregularly above yellow stockings and shoes far too expensive. Her arms, bare to the shoulders, hung beside her, so that she was a straight, yellow, perpendicular stem—like a candle—quite like it, with the flame of her face under her banded yellow hair. Her chin was up. Her eyes—they finished the flame and made its glow and warmth.

Mrs. True gasped.

"Go to your room!" she said.

Claribel lifted one shoulder.

"I don't at all mind," she answered airily. She offered a hand to Dalton. "I am sent to my room. When I grow up, Mr. Strong, will you come and see me sometime? I should like to know you when I have grown up."

Dalton Strong was no longer conscious of the great bunch of yellow roses which had been in his way. A little color came up to meet the line of his gray hair.

"Oh, why send her up, Anna?" he protested, and Mrs. True turned sharply at his voice. "I think it is very pretty."

"Now, that is nice of you," commended Claribel. "Look at me carefully. Am I not pretty?" She revolved slowly, so that no fold fled from the perpendicular—just wavered, seemed about to disclose, snuggled tight.

"Get your cloak," said Mrs. True shortly. "If Mr. Strong is willing to take you——"

"Do you think you had better take me?" Claribel smiled.

"I'll chance it," he answered gravely, and offered his flowers.

She sniffed at them.

"They don't smell so very good, do they? That is the trouble with yellow roses. Sometimes they smell just beautifully and sometimes they do not. But they are lovely. Thank you so much. You carry them, mother. They go with your dress all right. I don't want to be bothered."

This to Dalton Strong's flowers! Apparently he did not care. He was putting Claribel's cloak about her shoulders.

"This is an ugly coat," she was saying. "Like a child's. I've had it four years. I wish I had a grown-up coat. This doesn't go at all with me to-night; it quite spoils me."

"Mercy, Claribel, how you do keep us going!" said Tony crisply, as they went out.

Mrs. True was holding her fingers tightly together. What had happened to Claribel? She had always been wilful, but impertinent—no. Taking matters into her own hands—no. What could she do with her?

BUT when, at the club, she stood at the foot of the stairs in the crowd and saw Claribel come slowly down, a smile came. Why, the child was distinctive! Every one was looking at her with curiosity which was not critical—it was admiring, astonished, eager. The slim yellow wisp made every other girl look cheap. Mrs. True caught her breath; Claribel was like no other girl. Where did she get that calm disdain? Lovely—heavens, the child was lovely in her yellow swathings—not dress,

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frock, gown, creation—a sheath from which her beauty shone!

CLARIBEL stepped down into the hall and was immediately surrounded. "Isn't she posing, though?" She heard the whisper. She didn't care. Pose? Well, what of it? She could pose if she liked. She was quite aware of her sensation, and she was conscious of every one in the room. Her eyes sought each corner; she knew just who was there, that her mother and Dalton Strong were watching her. She even saw the odd new expression in the face of each—her mother's meant surrender. Strong's, she did not know. What matter? She could have laughed but for the old hurt inside her—the hurt both old and new—so old that she could not remember when she had not had it; so new that the first sting had not left. Hurts get better after a while—hurt fingers and knees and heads always had.

She moved among the crowd, chin up, eyes seeking, speaking here and there, poised and smiling.

The only man standing outlined against the dark-blue hangings at the door was Dr. Grant Holden. She could hear his voice; he was saying something to Lottie Lowe about supper. The last time she had heard his voice he had been hunting her with a pocket flash-light and calling—same voice: "Claribel! Clarie!" What would they all say, those people, if they knew? They'd laugh. At her, of course. Not at him. How long had it been? Must be at least a year. No; rather less than five days. Should she meet him? It would be rather nice to walk out where there was plenty of room for him to see how she looked. Then that very old hurt throbbed, and she was faintly sick. There was a long window close. She slipped out and pulled it shut after her. Cold struck through her chiffon.

"Dear God! Dear God! It hurts, doesn't it?" she said aloud.

He must have been watching her, for the window-hasp clinked almost at once. She knew, of course, who it must be. The voice:

"Claribel—Clarie—little love! You will take your death of cold."

"So I will," she answered, without looking at him. And again the hasp of the window clinked, for she had stepped back and inside it. She bumped into Dalton Strong. He must have been watching her, too.

"I saw you go out. You'll take your death of cold."

She laughed. Was that all men thought of—deaths of colds?

She laughed a second time—at nothing at all except the thought that she had been very drastic with Dr. Holden. She had jolted him a bit by turning from him so at once. Always in that far back past, when he had come near her, she had never been the one to go first. It must have surprised him to have her leave him like that. Clever of her to do it. But was it clever of her? Didn't it show him how she was hurt? Wouldn't a really grown-up and experienced woman have acted as usual? Certainly she would. She knew too late how a woman would have treated him.

Dalton Strong was saying something. She said "Yes." Then she said, "No," for variety, and then, "Yes" again.

They wandered together through the crowd. How hideous—hideous it was! She thought of the wet mountain road, of the ooze in which she had lain, of Jennie Dry, who was odd—sometime she must ask Jennie to explain some of the queer things she had said. Yes; she had refused to dance. No; it was not on his account. Yes; it was a very pretty party. No; she was not tired.

"Shall we have our supper, Claribel?" Even. Businesslike. Time to eat. Therefore eat.

There was a general exodus toward the dining-room.

"Don't you want to go in?" he was saying again, watching her.

"Please—oh, no!" She heard her voice shake. Now, what foolish thing was she going to do? He pulled his chair between hers and the draft from the window.

"Now, what is it, child?" he said.

"Nothing."

"Have you a better friend than I?"

"I don't think I have."

"Then, if anything troubles you, why not tell me?"

She sparred like a real woman.

"It's my shoe that hurts frightfully. Can you tell by looking which one it is?"

But he did not look at her shoes. He was looking at her face. Dalton Strong wanted to marry her, and he was getting ready to ask her. She was sure of it. She knew the signs as well as if she had seen them a hundred times. She thought she would get up,

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and then she thought she would not. Get it over. That was how the dentist had argued: "Get it over, Miss True. It won't take long, and you'll feel so much better." She thought of the dentist and looked at her shoes.

"Claribel," Dalton Strong was saying, "I am forty years old. You are eighteen, but I want you to marry me. Will you?"

There! Just like that! Wasn't he funny? Like buying a ticket for somewhere. "I want to go to Jonesville. Give me a ticket." That was the way he felt about her. He wanted a ticket to her. And he asked for it as a ticket should be asked for.

"I'd take good care of you, Claribel."

That was nice of him. It sounded as if he meant it. He looked flustered, too.

"You are awfully good to me always." She had to say something; that was as good as anything. But what a mercantile transaction! Now if— O dear God! Dear God! Faintly sick again—or something——

Then Dr. Holden and Lottie Lowe hesitated in the doorway—very briefly, but in that time she had whispered and laughed; he had glanced at Claribel and laughed, too.

Laughed! At her! To another girl! She turned her flaming little face toward the man beside her.

"I don't at all mind marrying you, Mr. Strong. And—and we will tell people right away, won't we?"

"I DON'T know why there should be any such hurry," Claribel was saying within the week to her mother.

Mrs. True was pale; her hair was less perfectly done; there was a sag that really showed about her jaw-bones. Claribel's trousseau was a tremendous thing for her to achieve. For many nights she had lain, blankly staring—the money had to come; Claribel must be properly equipped. Mrs. True had tossed her arms in the dark. Sacrifice! Sacrifice! Never anything for herself.

And then Claribel put her lips into their stubborn line after she had said, "I don't know why there should be any such hurry."

"The selfishness—the abominable selfishness of youth!" said Mrs. True, her face flushing. "I want to get this over and have a moment's peace."

"I don't want to be hurried like this."

The door-knob rattled, and Claribel whirled about. Antoinette Ferbush rattled knobs preliminary to entrance. Her high voice rang out.

"Miss Stanger waits in the hall below to put together the bride's trousseau," she announced dramatically.

"I wish you would mind your own business," said Claribel.

"It is my business. It's the business of every one. A wedding is a public matter. Miss Stanger is full of information about your clothes—what they are to be and what they are to cost."

"They will cost enough," sighed Mrs. True. "More than I can afford. I don't see how I can manage it."

Claribel was standing at the window with her back to the room—a straight dark-blue wisp—her yellow hair, banded flat, lying under the broad rays of the sun.

"Miss Stanger will wait for her money, won't she?" asked Tony.

"Miss Stanger must be paid if we go without bread. How long would it take her to tell if I asked her to wait?"

Claribel turned from the window and looked at the two, then turned back to her contemplation of the side yard.

"Claribel takes the high-and-mighty stand," remarked Tony.

Mrs. True shrugged her shoulders.

"I give you my word, Tony, that I am at my wit's end about her."

"Oh, never mind her. She's a *poseur*, Anna. She'll get over it. You look racked to pieces. I wish I had a bit of money to loan you, but I'm broke—stone broke."

"You always are," said the other sympathetically.

"Always. And no rich man coming into the family to relieve the pressure. I don't mind saying I would have liked Dalton Strong myself. Either of us might have been persuaded—eh, Anna?"

Mrs. True's tired eyes were covered by their lids. Of course, Tony would have liked Dalton Strong's money, but she didn't care for him. Tony had never ached—just a bit—because his touch on her arm was firm. She smiled faintly at the thought of how surprised Dalton would be to know how she thought of him.

"I would suggest," said Tony into the silence, "that you are not paying Miss Stanger four dollars a day to sit in the front hall."

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"No, no—of course not! Do call her, Tony. Will you stay a while? You know about colors; you might suggest."

"Good Lord!" said Claribel from the window. "I hope my dresses are not to look like Tony's magazine covers."

It was an odd face that she turned to them—corrugations across her forehead, a smile about her mouth that was old and hurting; her lovely color was not moving about—it was not there at all.

Her mother looked at her sharply.

"Headache?"

"No!" A sharp, crisp word, flung out by force of—what? Mrs. True did not know—at least, she was not sure. Since the night Claribel had come home the girl was different. She was more than wilful. There was a carefully buried fear back in Mrs. True's head. She banished it angrily every time it put up a seeking head—how much did she *not* know of that night at Dr. Holden's house? Somehow, that fear put up its head oftenest when Tony was about. Did she have one, too? So much the more reason to bury hers hastily.

"Yes; please stay, Tony. Where are you going, Claribel?"

"I am going out."

"Where?"

"Out."

"I wish you to stay here. For heaven's sake, don't make a scene before Miss Stanger! Don't give her anything to tell."

"I don't care what she tells."

"You are a selfish little beast, Claribel," said Tony. "Look at your mother."

Claribel looked. The ray of sun which had banded her hair had moved along and lay over Mrs. True's face.

"Please let me go, mother! I'll come back. Right back. In a half-hour I'll come back. I'll— Oh, don't cry. Miss Stanger will see you. Let me go a little while and get—adjusted. I can't be here with you and Tony and so much talk. Please let me go."

"Where are you going?"

"To the hospital to see Jennie Dry."

"Just there?"

"Yes; just there."

"Do you promise me, Claribel, to go directly there and come directly back?"

"Yes."

"Tony—if you will go with her——"

Claribel interrupted, her voice hard:

"I'm not a paroled prisoner, yet, I suppose. If I cannot be trusted to go out alone for half an hour, I am hardly worth worrying about, am I? Why don't you take a decent way to treat me? Why don't——"

The door crashed after her so that every trinket on her mother's much-betrinketed dressing-table shivered and clicked.

CLARIBEL plunged down the stairs and was dragging her hat from the rack when the bell rang. She flung open the door and was suddenly sobered and silenced to face Dalton Strong's maiden sister, sole other survivor of the family—eccentric, exclusive, extremely rich and extremely learned. Miss Strong was looked upon with awe; there was no record of any one ever having been at ease in her presence.

Miss Sophie Strong never smiled. But she was smiling then. Claribel crushed her tam-o'-shanter in both hands and stepped back.

"My dear child"—Miss Strong was still smiling—"I came at once to say how rejoiced I am."

"Oh, come in, Miss Strong." Claribel realized that it was some condescension for Miss Strong to stand upon her door-mat. "Come in."

Miss Strong walked into the living-room as one who owned the house. Claribel followed, feeling cornered and curious. The visitor drew her to an erect seat beside her.

"My dear child, there is nothing that could give me greater pleasure than the news my brother has told me. You are extremely beautiful, my dear, and will be in every way a credit to us, I am sure."

"Oh, Miss Strong—it's not really—settled yet."

"Quite settled, my dear. He can afford to do as he likes, and he is extremely taken with your personality Your extreme beauty—" She looked at Claribel curiously. "It is remarkable that mere flesh and blood should take on such attractive form. I shall count much upon your children, my dear."

"My—children?"

"We shall hope for a large family. Not to break down your health—I shall watch that carefully—but in your children we shall find the comfort of declining years."

Claribel did not scream. She was cold all over—no; not cold—hot. Sickening waves chased about her. What was this,

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anyhow, to which she was being promised? Children! She did not understand much about it; her curiosity had never been roused. She was to live in his house and spend his money—that had seemed her mother's idea. She was suddenly afraid of this old woman who was going to see that her health was not broken because of too many children. She got up suddenly.

The hand that took hers was like a neat steel implement. It drew her back.

"Yes; I have thought of nothing else since Dalton told me. He was a wonderful son; he is a wonderful brother. He will make as wonderful a husband."

Claribel said nothing. She felt married—definitely, permanently married. Her firm sister-in-law had accepted her, had all plans made for the future.

She never had a clear recollection of the rest of that interview. Her mother came down, looking rather pretty and graceful, and together they hammered down solidly the woodenness in which Claribel felt encased.

When they were alone, she turned to the mother wildly.

"I'm done for!" she cried. "I'm done for! I'm the same as married. What can I do about it? I'm the same as married now!"

"Don't be silly," said her mother sharply. "Be thankful that they want you."

"Why be thankful that they want me? Why shouldn't they?"

"Because of what happened a week ago." Mrs. True was watching keenly, fearfully. She wanted to know.

"Oh, that!" Claribel turned away.

THE days that followed were whisking circles of invitations, garments, plans, visitors, gifts. Claribel stayed outside the flying circumference. Mrs. True woke each morning to wonder if Claribel's indifference, acquiescence would last the day out, or whether she would throw the whole thing over in some riot of refusal. The wedding preparations had gone on without her approval, but without her apparent disapproval. She discussed nothing; she allowed her clothes to be fitted without comment. On the day she was to have gone to Dalton Strong's house to an intimate family dinner, she took Rusty for a walk and did not come back until long past the hour. That was Dalton Strong's first protest.

"Anna," he said gravely, "I would not marry Claribel if I thought she did not want to marry me, much as I love her." The word "love" slipped incongruously from his thin lips, but easily, too, as if it had been much in his mind.

"Can't you pay no attention to her?" asked Mrs. True, with a sigh. "She is very odd, and she is very young—younger than her years. I don't know what fantastic notion she had. I have thought best to let her alone. If you can do the same, I am sure it will turn out all right."

"Do you think she cares at all for me?"

Such a silly question! Mrs. True could have laughed if she had not been ready to cry.

"She doesn't know, Dalton. If only you were satisfied to let it alone!"

"Is she interested and happy in the preparations?"

"Oh, yes," lied Mrs. True. "She's shy of you. You can't blame her. She has always been unlike other girls. She's very naughty sometimes, but she's very sweet."

"I don't want her pushed into anything, Anna."

"Push her! I'd hate to try," said Claribel's mother, and Dalton joined in her laugh. "She is a handful, Dalton. But if you can just let her alone——"

So, as nearly as possible, they let her alone, and all plans and futures stood still on the thin foundational crust of Claribel's wordless acceptance.

The crust held the scheme upright until the wedding-day.

Claribel was up early. She dressed, went down-stairs and whistled for Rusty.

She went far out on a country road. She knew why she was going. She had the right, at this very last moment of being Claribel True, to see him. At least *see* him and speak, if she felt like it. He drove in town by that road.

She walked, head well up. Perhaps she should pass him with just a casual bow and a very shining smile—it was important, that smile. Perhaps she would wave her hand, or stop and talk with him, if she should feel like it.

She knew his car the moment it swung into sight ahead, and she knew instantly that she did not want to talk with him, that she had done another foolish thing. There was no place to hide. He had seen her, of

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course, walking brazenly to meet him. She called Rusty and drew him off the road to her side.

Then she saw that Dr. Holden was not alone. There was a woman with him whose gray fur coat muffled her face, whose rose-colored veil wrapped and rewrapped her gray hat. He did not slacken speed. He put his hand sharply to the edge of his cap in salute. Then it was over, all but the twinkle of rose color in the wind. He had gone by with a touch of his cap—the most indifferent, casual thing in the world. What a fool she was! What a blazing, blazing fool!

She walked back, thinking little, burning much.

SHE went to the hospital where Jennie Dry still lay, big and straight under her bed-covers. Her infected arm was getting well, but it had been a struggle.

Rusty reached her extended hand first. He was allowed in the hospital because of his extreme courtesy and understanding.

Jennie Dry looked at Claribel with adoring eyes.

"You've ben that good t'me," she said. It was always the first word—a sort of prelude. "I'm gettin' pretty near well, young baby. Set up all day yesterday. 'Nother week'll let me out. I don't know how I'm t'pay ye fur what ye've done."

"I wanted to do it, Jennie." Claribel's slight hand lay over one of the broad ones. Jennie raised it and kissed it.

"When I get back home, child, I'm goin' t'miss ye. I'll never see ye again—ye'll never be up there again."

"I'll miss you, too, Jennie."

And, indeed, she thought she would. She liked to have her hand kissed; she liked the adoration in the watching eyes. No one else cared much—all her mother wanted of her was that she should go through with this wedding matter—no one else cared. She did not even think of Dalton Strong.

"I don't s'pose that I could get somethin' t'do in town here, so's to see ye—not t'be bothersome—jus' now an' again."

"What could you do, Jennie?"

"I could keep a house right. Cook an' look after things. I could keep a big place right."

A big place. Dalton Strong's was that. And she, Claribel, was to be its mistress. Married women engaged housekeepers if they liked and when they liked.

She leaned forward eagerly with sudden new authority.

"Jennie, I am to be married to-night." It startled her to mention it. She had never spoken of it before.

Jennie stiffened under the bedclothes; her upper lip lifted as it had done the night she talked so much.

"I am going to marry a Mr. Strong."

"To-night, young baby? An' ye came t'see me!"

"I wanted to tell you. I—I hadn't thought to tell you before. Jennie, would you like to live with me—take care of my house for me?"

"Ye don't mean it?"

"I do mean it. I'd like to have you, Jennie. You and Rusty are my best friends."

Jennie put one hand over her eyes. Her mouth worked distressingly.

It was rather nice to engage housekeepers and have them feel so—to be a personage who had her hands kissed, could give happiness, had authority. Rather nice—a long shot from a flaunting rose-colored veil and a wet roadside.

When she went down-stairs, she turned into Dr. Hankins' office to speak to him about Jennie's bill. Her mother had asked her who was to pay it. She hadn't known then, but she knew now. She was to pay it. Married women paid bills. That was what husbands were for. It had never seemed a personal matter before, despite all that had been said about the money she was marrying.

Dr. Hankins shook her hands—both of them. She must not think of Jennie's bill—any time—any time at all.

Then Claribel had to step aside from the door to let some one pass her. Dr. Holden was so close that she could smell his wet rain-coat. She looked straight at him with all the new authority—the housekeeper, the good-as-paid bill.

He was awkward. He who knew how to deal with women was distinctly surprised, and unpleasantly so. His ready words faltered. His eyes were not confident; they sought hers and moved away. She exulted. She felt very old and calmly indifferent to any one in the ordinary practise of medicine—she whose position was assured. New

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affectations and airs rushed to her; she loosened the collar of her coat and shifted it casually on her shoulders.

"So very warm," she murmured. "Yes, Dr. Hankins; thank you so much. Oh, you are good to say so! Oh, I don't mind being out on my wedding-day. That's quite the way we do nowadays, we brides—we are not shut up any more. You are coming, of course. Good-by. Good-by, Dr. Holden. So glad to have seen you both. You are always so kind to me. Yes—really. Good-by."

He did not offer his hand. She went out with Rusty circling about her, and she made little springs and dives at him as they went down the walk—all to Rusty's immense and noisy delight.

"It's clearing," she announced in the sewing-room. "It's going to be a beautiful day after all."

Mrs. True looked up and faintly flushed. What had happened? Anything? Or was it just Claribel? Whatever it was, she took prompt advantage of it.

"Miss Stanger wants you to put on your dress, dear, to get the length of your veil."

Claribel was still cheerful during the process. Once she smoothed her hand softly down the lustrous satin and smiled as if she liked it. Tears rushed to Mrs. True's eyes. If only the child would be sensible and happy!

Claribel revolved slowly before the pier-glass.

"It's lovely, Miss Stanger," she said. It was her first word of satisfaction.

Tony Ferbush swung the door open.

"Lord, Claribel! You're a beautiful thing!"

"Yes, I am," said Claribel seriously.

"Guess who came in with me. The future owner of all this loveliness. Let him see you, Claribel—go down and let him see you."

"No, no!" shrieked little Miss Stanger. "It's bad luck for him to see her in her weddin'-dress until the church."

"It would be good luck to any girl to be seen like that. Go on down, Claribel. Let him see you." Claribel smiled at her reflection again. "Go on," urged Tony.

And Dalton Strong, standing nervously on the hearth-rug, with a red-leather case in his hand, turned to confront the loveliness of which Tony had spoken.

He stared at her. The blood rose over his grayness; it made him look suddenly young—that and the light in his gray eyes.

"See me," said Claribel, and smiled.

She was like a child, turned her slim back to him, swept her veil across his feet.

His voice trembled, and he spoke low to tell her the usual thing. Mr. Strong was not original, but he touched the old words with fervor—new.

"This is yours." He opened the leather case with fingers that were unsteady. "Not half lovely enough for you. I wish they were a million times more."

A string of pearls—the best New York could select and match.

Claribel held them in her hands—a double handful, lustrous, unbelievably hers.

She held them against her throat and smiled. Dalton Strong was close, and primal things shook him. He caught her close, put his lips under her chin, crowded them there.

For a second she stood. Then she tore herself away, her strong arms fighting him from her. She looked at him with horror, loathing, fear. Then she fled up the stairs, tearing her veil away as she went.

She flung it on the floor.

"Get it out of my sight! Do you think I will be touched like that? There will be no wedding!"

Her room door crashed and the turn of the key snapped.

"What did you do to her?" demanded Mrs. True.

"I—I only kissed her," said Dalton Strong miserably.

"Why couldn't you have let her alone? Now what are we to do?" groaned Mrs. True.

Over the rug the pearls were scattered like milky, shining, glowing drops.

THE rest of that day in Mrs. True's household was like no other on record.

The hour fixed for the wedding was eight. All afternoon Miss Stranger sewed on the torn wedding-veil, ears eagerly cocked, figure stiffened with excitement.

Tony sewed with her, silently. The bride behind her locked door made no sign. The caterer's men were in possession. The florist unloaded palms and crates.

Dalton Strong sat all afternoon by the living-room fireplace. Those doors were closed, too. At five o'clock Mrs. True came to him.

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"Go home and dress," she said.

"Have you—has she——"

"Nothing. She does not answer me, but we are going ahead with our preparations. You must, too. Be back at the proper time."

"It seems worse than folly to try and go on," he said slowly, "if that is the way she feels about me. Have you been quite frank with me, Anna? Have you been pushing the child? No matter how embarrassing the situation to me, I would face it rather than"—slow red covered his paleness—"rather than see again what I saw in her to-day. I am abased in my own mind, and will be so publicly rather than force her. I did not realize I was so distasteful. I—I did not mean to be a brute. Anna—is it not best to call it off? I—if I can bear it, surely you should be able to."

"Go home and dress. That is all I can say. Be back here at the proper time."

"But—remember I want to do what is best for her."

"And don't you suppose I do?" Mrs. True was near the breaking-point.

This was at five o'clock.

At six Mrs. True had been admitted to her daughter's room and came out bearing the wedding-gown.

"Look it over," she said, and returned to Claribel's room.

At seven o'clock mother and daughter were facing each other in the light from a street-lamp. Mrs. True's fingers, wandering among the trinkets on Claribel's desk, snapped the stem of a rose-vase, dropped the pieces—snapped another which had been a candlestick—traveled on.

"So you see." Her low voice had finality in it. "I never expected to tell you this. I have struggled to keep it from you, but now when I see you thinking only of your own whims—I tell you that the hardness of life, the inevitableness of it shall frighten you as it has frightened me. Results are not to be evaded. There is no getting yesterday back. The finger of Life writes on. You can't stop it. You don't know that. Why should you know it? Youth doesn't know—a protected youth, as yours has been."

She stopped, drew all the trinkets to her, pushed them all back.

"And you have the taint. I have nothing but dread and fear for you. You have all the disregard, the defiance of him. You have my wilfulness and stubbornness. You have been safeguarded by innocence, but innocence won't last forever, and what are you to do then—defy everything, as I did? You'll not do as well as I. You can't say but I have done well—made position for you, given you the best as far as I could. You made me tell you. You haven't added to my happiness by that."

Again she rearranged the trinkets, and again silence held the room.

"I had to make it concrete for you to listen. Since you were very little you have had no regard for anything except what you wanted at the moment. I have tried to show you that what you do to-day is a done thing, that it touches all your future. You can't get it back. Claribel, you can never get back where you were before you went to Grant Holden's house that night. No matter what happened there—it is written down. It is final. Maybe you don't see it now, but you will see it. You will cringe all your life from that act, no matter how innocent it was. You wrote it down. You'll pay for it. You can't get it back. Once a thing is done, you can't get it back."

"How much does—Mr. Strong know of what you have told me?"

"He knows it all."

"And wants to marry me just the same?"

"Yes."

There was silence again. Mrs. True got up slowly and passed her hands over her face, clasped them about her throat.

"I feel as if I were dead—dead and moving about anyhow. Claribel, I have nothing more to say. You must see what hangs upon what you do. You can't temporize on this. If you could, I would let you do it and be glad to evade a decision for a while and go on as we have. You accepted him of your own accord. The act stands. It will always stand. You can't get past it. It's done. It's written. I wish I could have taught you that better." She waited a minute for an answer that did not come. "I am in my room if you want me," she said.

THE servants were peering from back hall and doorways. It was time for the bride to come down to go to the church. There were no attendants. Dalton Strong stood

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alone just within the door—never grayer in face, in skin, in eyes.

There was the sound of movement above. Mrs. True's blue clinging gown suited her; her color-box had done its work. She touched Dalton Strong quickly.

"Don't look like that. It's all right—all right."

For down the stairs came the vision that was Claribel, her wedding-veil in a cloud behind her, her eyes straight ahead.

CLARIBEL STRONG was interested in her new possessions. She liked her electric motor exceedingly, and the smaller things quite as well. She had been used to having private comforts skimped for public ones; she knew how little there could be up-stairs and how much down-stairs, that a satin gown did not necessarily cover suitable underthings. She knew how to avoid the tradesmen who were most importunate—the tone of the butcher in the kitchen. There would be no more of that.

The Dalton Strong house was the showplace of the neighborhood. It had high ceilings, tall windows, curved at the top cathedral-wise, that opened to the floor with quaint little balconies to step out upon—and step back. The great living-room had huge fireplaces at each end, broad gray hearthstones. It was a man's room, with deep couches and chairs, bookcases that tucked themselves everywhere.

Across the hall was the state drawing-room, living up to its name in every fall of curtain and dignity of spindle chair-leg. It was gray, too—satin furniture in geometric regularity on gray, thick-piled rugs.

Tony Ferbush had said of the place: "Pull it about, Claribel. You can make it stunning. Get a decorator and pull the place about."

Claribel thought she would. It would take her mind from other matters coming freshly after the blurring excitement of travel. Among them the memory of the afternoon of her wedding-day and her mother's odd face as her hands had traveled back and forth among the trinkets on her desk. Mrs. True had said that Dalton Strong knew the whole story. He had never hinted at it. She wondered if she would speak of it to him, or let it alone, as something to be forgotten as far as possible. He was big and fine and generous. Who was it who started that story about his love for his money?

Yes; she would pull the place about. It would give her something to do, and Dalton never questioned what she did.

She did not know just what to say when he stopped her as she was running down the steps to her car.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Just to drive," she answered, getting into the machine as if her life had been spent in one. "Will you come?"

"But where are you going? What place?"

"No particular place. Just to drive."

She did not know the expression of his face then.

"You have been every place that you can drive with that car, haven't you?"

"Been? Why, yes! But I am going again."

"I don't see what pleasure there is in riding through the old places unless you have an errand. And, by the way, Claribel, I have just had the bill for your machine. You are using a great deal of power to do nothing but ride around."

"Do you mean that you don't want me to drive unless I have an errand?"

"I don't mean that exactly. I just want you to be as careful as you can. No use to waste. Use what you need and then stop is a good rule, my dear."

"Well," said Claribel, with her hand on the starter, "I don't understand you. You did such extravagant things while we were gone, and now—to fuss about the expense of my car——"

"I am not fussing about it. But when we were away it was different. It was a holiday. Now that we are settled down, we'll get our stride, my dear. Go along, of course. But don't waste."

That was the first of many similar conversations in which Claribel's old enemy—economy—raised its head from a long sleep. After her first astonishment that her husband could seriously regard the spending of an extra dollar, she was inclined to make a joke of it. There again she was surprised; it was the first subject upon which he had not deferred to her. Perfectly new expressions seemed to come easily to him; new lines slipped into his face and appeared to be at home.

"I have no money," she said to him one morning. She was not exactly shy of

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saying it, but it did seem odd to ask for cash—currency.

"Why do you need money?"

"Oh, why does any one need money? I like to have it in my purse."

"You must stop at the office, then," he answered curtly.

She drove down-town with him.

"Send me some money out by Gilbert," she said."

SHE sat in the motor and watched the people as they passed. Once she had hurried along like that; sometimes the heels of her shoes were run down a little, too. Now there was nothing more luxurious than the car in which she sat. Material things counted, didn't they? They were constant matters; they were the levels. High spots came only now and then; dead levels were always present, and if they were made easy with money, was not that the best there was?

Then Gilbert came out and handed her a dollar bill. She looked at it.

"Mr. Strong sent it out to you."

One dollar! Was Gilbert amused? Nothing looked so but his eyes. Claribel put the bill in her gold purse; the great car swayed gently; the silk curtain touched her hot cheek softly. People turned to look as Gilbert swept imposingly ahead—one dollar was her own to do with as she pleased!

Gilbert was drawing to the curb because some one was waving—Tony Ferbush. Claribel opened the door.

"Get in," she said.

Tony dropped beside her with a sigh. Miss Ferbush was more angular. That her hat was audacious did not take attention from a droop of her mouth; that her cheeks were neatly rouged did not hold the eye from tiny crisscrossing lines—such lines as morning sun is merciless to. In a ten-o'-clock sun she might be fighting a losing game with youth.

"It makes me furious to look at you, Claribel," she began. "You look as complacent as a kitten on a silk cushion. Who are you, anyway, that you should be riding round like this while I walk? How goes it, Claribel?"

"Oh, all right."

"Already adopting the *blasé* in tone! My Lord! I wonder what you would do if you had to pull your own game."

"I have pulled it."

"You have done nothing of the kind. Your mother always took the heavy end. And now you will never have a care. I don't get the justice of it. Look at me. I give you my word, Claribel, I don't know where next month's rent is coming from. Did you ever try to eat as little as possible because you needed the money for other things?"

Tony's voice had dramatic quality. Claribel was at once concerned.

"But you are exaggerating."

"Not at all. Of course you haven't heard about the purchasing power of a dollar." Claribel winced at mention of the sum. "I don't care how many other people are hit by it, but I care extremely when it hits me across the face."

"Yes; we care a lot for personal hurts, don't we?"

"Why shouldn't we? It is all we've got—ourselves. And it is all we should have. Living is a tremendous responsibility."

"Yes—isn't it?" cried Claribel eagerly. "It is so easy to make mistakes, and they count for so much when you make them."

"How do you mean?" Curiosity was rampant in Tony's look.

"I mean that all one does counts for so much. Look at me. I married. It is so definite—no matter what happens in the future, I *married* Dalton. I can't get away from it. It is done."

"You could leave him, I suppose."

"That's it!" cried Claribel triumphantly. "If I did! To-day! If I never went home, I *married* him just the same. It is dreadful how inevitable is the result of every act, Tony. Don't laugh. I've been thinking. I can think by myself."

"Can you? You never have. Let me out, Claribel. I must rustle for rent and food. And the sixty-cent *tables d'hôte* have gone up to seventy-five. Ruin!"

"Come out to dinner to-night, Tony."

"I certainly will. Seventy-five to the good."

"Come whenever you like. You know I always want you. Come often, Tony."

"Establishing your private bread-line?"

They both laughed, and Tony climbed wearily out and walked away.

"Poor Tony! I'll make her come to dinner every night," considered Claribel in a burst of sympathy.

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And after dinner that night, she said:

"Tony dear, Jennie has fixed a room for you. It is to be your own, and you are to come whenever you like. Whether I ask you or not, the room is yours, and you are to drop in when it suits you. You are a member of the family."

"That's white of you, Claribel. You are trying to beat the high cost of living for me; you really don't like me."

"I do like you, Tony. How silly!"

"What does Dalton say?"

"He wants you, too. Don't you, Dalton, want Tony any time?"

He was pacing the long living-room, looking at the changes which Claribel had wrought. He stopped to touch her shoulder, tenderness softening his face, youth throwing her spirit and glow over him.

"Surely we want you, Tony. Claribel rattles round in this big house when I am not here."

He could be so nice when he chose. Claribel beamed upon him.

But after Antoinette had gone, he looked up from some papers.

"Claribel, our bill for groceries is twice that of last month."

"Oh—is it?"

"There is waste somewhere. In the kitchen. Does Jennie do the ordering?"

"I—don't know. Maybe she does. But we have very good things to eat, Dalton, and prices are high. Are they not?" She asked it tentatively.

"The florist sends a bill of twenty-three dollars."

"That doesn't seem very much. I like flowers about."

"It is a great deal with the yard full of them. And when did you use eight dollars' worth of taxi-cabs—with three machines."

"Mine was being charged or something, I think."

"And the telephone bill this month is four dollars. Whom did you call to that extent?"

"Mercy! I don't know. Must I know?"

"You should have some idea. The bills are too high by half."

Claribel sighed.

"This is an expensive house. I wish we had a smaller one."

"What? Nonsense! This has always been kept up; but why spend money foolishly?"

They were rather puzzling days for Claribel. Life was very confusing. Take her marriage, for instance: Dalton had allowed her to refurnish the house as she liked after consultations with a decorator who thought only in large sums. Dalton did not object to what she had done to the house, but a telephone bill over three dollars got on his nerves. He thought twenty-five dollars too much to pay for shoes. He said so. He saw no reason why her stationery should have expensive monograms. His money conservations and extravagances were beyond her understanding. She bought a chinchilla coat, and he only whistled when the bill came. She asked for a week in New York, and he said it was folly. He put her into the day-coach, and she was compelled to pay the parlor-car fare out of her own extremely small roll of real money. She wished he would not do things that way. She thought she would like him better if he did not.

It was not definite unhappiness. Claribel was not sentimental. She had married of her own will.

Her mother's letters cheered her. They told how well she was; how papa's people had asked her to dinner. Claribel could hardly fancy her mother without a pucker between her brows. There was no pucker in the letters. "That's one good thing I have done," she considered.

She had done another good act to Tony, who dropped in very regularly, better dressed and vivacious. She used Claribel's wraps and hats, her motors and house. She was sisterlike to Dalton—sometimes slipped her hand through his arm. Claribel herself did not do that; she did not care especially about touching him. If Tony did, why, let her touch, as he did not seem to object.

Then Dr. Grant Holden came home from a summer in the West.

CLARIBEL had adjusted her life without Dr. Holden. She had grown to look upon him as some one forever removed from making any decisions about.

Then, of a sudden, he was back. It was a startling thing.

She at once took stock of herself with a new vanity which had dawned in her because she had been much flattered. The mirror said that she had a slightly new silhouette, and less childish, more of

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consequence—due, some of it, she considered, to her clothes. There was nothing of the schoolgirl about them; they were the selections of a capricious, luxurious woman. She did not look at all like the person Dr. Grant Holden would find familiar speech for, despite disturbing memories—she had trailed her lips down his cheek, put her mouth to his, asked how soon she could come to him to stay—burning matters to recall. Well—She caught her breath; she couldn't help what she had done.

HE WAS pretty sure to be at the country club that afternoon; he had as much curiosity about her as she had about him.

But he did not seem to be especially curious. He did not come immediately to speak to her. She stood where he must see her, shifted her position to show him her other side where the sash of her skirt shone white and jade-green.

She heard his step. Now! If he did not stop and speak to her, it was because he was afraid to trust himself. Would it be that?

It was not that. He came—in a leisurely manner, offered his hand.

"How do you do, Mrs. Strong?"

She had meant to say something bright, but for the moment she could not think of it, and some one had asked a question about his journey.

He was answering easily, moving on, talking as he went, greeting, laughing. Nothing more for her but a careless glance that did not halt. She felt fourteen. She did not know what to do with her hands.

No one paid any attention; in less than a year every one had forgotten that Dr. Holden was her especial property. Even he had forgotten it.

The gong sounded for dinner, and Dalton had not come. She sat down to wait for him. People trooped to the dining-room. Only a few were loitering about.

She knew he was standing back of her before he spoke. She knew who was dragging a chair to face her. She was excited, young, distressed. He made himself quite comfortable and smiled at her.

"Well, my dear—" The rising inflection that he always used; that was to be his tack, then—the usual.

"Well?"

"I am glad to see you, dear child."

"You don't look glad."

"I'm not. That was a platitude."

"It will be all platitudes."

It was the wrong thing to say. Why drag in the past? Why demand of him that he talk sentiment?"

"All platitudes for us, did you mean?"

"I did not mean much of anything. Did you have a good trip?"

"What do you care about my trip?"

"Nothing."

"Nor did I. Do you know what I was thinking about all the time?" She shook her head. "You—and Dalton Strong."

"You need not have troubled yourself. We were all right."

"I came back just to see you. To ask you—no; I shall not ask you. I'll just look at you and go away."

She ran her fingers along the arm of her chair, looked at them in the coming darkness and brushed away imaginary dust.

"It's amazing how a little girl like you had hold of me."

"Had?"

"Had—and has." His face was flushing. He leaned forward, not to touch her but his eyes were caressing. "Claribel, why can't I let you alone?"

"I wondered why."

"You pulled me back here. I thought I'd be better when I saw you, and when you came along the veranda this afternoon—did you know, little love, how I felt about you?"

"You talked—and laughed."

"Did you expect me to be silent—and to cry?"

"I didn't expect anything."

"You knew I was home?"

"Yes."

"But you were not thinking about me?"

"Some."

He leaned farther forward, his hands clasped between his knees, his fingers just not quite touching hers.

"Now I'm here and—what, love? Holy smoke! Why did I let you do it? Could I have prevented you if I had tried?"

"Prevented me from——"

"Marrying."

"At least you didn't try."

"It seemed a good thing for you."

"It was a good thing for me."

"Don't you say that! Let me say it—not you. Clarie—when am I to see you, to talk to you?"

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"You are talking to me."

"To tell you why I was the brute to you that I was. But it hasn't hurt you, has it?"

"Oh, no; it hasn't hurt," she said slowly. "It just broke everything—all my beliefs—and all."

"Clarie—how can I see you alone?"

"You can't."

"I can come to your house."

"Oh, yes, of course, if you like. Evenings when Dalton is home."

"That is not what I want. Where can I see you? I tell you I must. You lovely thing—and I let all that go by me!"

"You not only let it go by—you sent it by."

"Claribel—where can I see you?"

"At home. Evenings."

"No."

"Here."

"With a million people looking on? No. Will you drive with me to-morrow?"

"Certainly not."

He hesitated, moved his chair closer.

"Clarie, I am staying at the mountain house. Could we have a day together for old-time's sake?"

"You were shocked when I came there. You sent me back."

"I had to. Did you think it was easy?"

"It seemed easy enough."

"Will you come out there?"

"Why? When you did not want me before, why do you want me now?"

"It's different now."

"Because I am married?" He was silent. "And it's some one else's job to protect me?"

"I am surprised at you, Claribel. I don't know you like this. It's unlike you."

She felt a rising tide of indignation. Hadn't she gone to him once with all the love she knew—and innocence? It had been very sweet—that love for him.

"You are different, Claribel."

"Oh, I have learned things," she said excitedly. "I call things by their right names now. I know what things mean. Once you complained that I misused the word 'love.' I think I did misuse it, but, you see, I did not know any other word then. No; I shall not come to your house, Dr. Holden—never! Not even with other people. Not with everybody in the world there, too."

She stood up and twisted her sash-ends hard. She felt tragic, and surely he must see that she was quite grown-up and understanding.

"No," she repeated haughtily, lifting her chin; "I certainly shall never come to your house."

Quick steps crossed toward them. It was Dalton. He and Holden shook hands cordially, talked gaily, laughed—Holden especially. His eyes were bright and very much amused.

He did not turn back to her for a parting word. He had seemingly forgotten she was there. He had a very good time all through dinner. If his eyes met hers—she could not help but look—they did not linger; they were just roving, indifferent.

She pinched her fingers in her lap. She even tried to catch his eyes. There was much story-telling and laughter. Some one sang. It was all very miserable.

But he had her cloak in his arms when she went out, and he held it while she put her arms in. She looked at him, woebegone. He laughed at her.

"You silly, silly child!" he said through the buzz of departure. "I must laugh at you, for you are so silly. But you are very sweet—my little love." He clasped her elbow tight for a second. She held the spot all the way home. It was so unexpected after that wretched evening. "My little love." She closed her eyes and dreamed it over.

CLARIBEL thought much during the first days after her talk with Dr. Holden. She knew the town, the people. She did not fancy the idea of being talked about.

Then, too, she preferred to take care of Dalton's name. It stood high. It would be hard to hold up a name and keep pushing it down all the time. She wouldn't do that. She might push it clear down and stand upon it openly and royally, but not the other.

It would be hard not to see Dr. Holden. She missed him. There were few interesting things in the world. Dalton certainly was not interesting; he was just routine. He couldn't feel a big thing, couldn't do one. Now, Grant Holden could do the big, the admirable, the impelling thing if it came his way. Dalton never could; he would be petty. But Holden— Oh, he thrilled! He could do a brave, a spectacular thing nobly.

She had better not see him much, for

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everything was so wretchedly inevitable. Once you acted—there you were, nailed to its result for life. No; she wouldn't see him, except as every one else saw him. She didn't dare. It was lonesome. The house was just the house. Gowns were just gowns. Even furs were just furs—it was hard to realize that when she had so longed for them. But it was a fact. Too bad!

And Tony bored her horribly. She was always swishing her petticoats, her bright gowns, her high laugh, her gale-blown hair all over the place. Claribel was deadly sick of them. There was no privacy. She couldn't tell what moment Tony would be in, and the hours when she was not there were spoiled by the expectation of her. To be sure, she amused Dalton. But, really, why should Dalton be amused at Claribel's expense? She supposed there was no way to give Tony a hint. She might ask Dalton; it was his line—diplomacy, you know. Suppose she should go to the city for a couple of weeks. The idea was diverting.

She began at once, across the hearth-rug, her eyes shining, new excitement in her face. He smiled as he looked at her.

"What are you waiting to tell me?" he asked.

"I want to ask a great favor."

"Bills are already high enough." But he smiled. "What is it?"

"I want to go to New York for a couple of weeks."

"Why? Can't you get what you want here?"

"I don't want anything. I just want to get away."

"Get away? Why?"

"Because I just want to. I want to go about and see something different."

"You could not go about alone, and I cannot go just now."

"Oh, I don't want you!" He smiled faintly at her emphasis. "I want to be alone."

He considered.

"You might take Tony, I suppose."

"Lord, no! That's why I want to go—to get away from her."

"To get away from——"

"Tony."

It was not possible—was it?—that he flushed.

"I think she is very good company for you, Claribel."

"I would like to choose my own company."

"She is here by your invitation."

"Yes; but, Dalton—I didn't think it was to be so all the time. If I were away a while, it might break into her habit of being here so constantly. That's the gospel truth, Dalton. That's why I want to go. She makes me nervous. It isn't very thoughtful of her to be here so much. She should know that sometimes I don't want her. She's always everywhere. I don't want to be selfish——"

"You are being very selfish."

"Well, I don't care. Let me go, Dalton, for a couple of weeks."

He did not smile.

"I think a couple of weeks in New York would be rather an expensive way to hurt the feelings of your best friend."

"I won't buy anything," said Claribel miserably. "I'll really not. I don't eat much—my meals would not count up, if you are afraid of the money."

"Nonsense!" He said it sharply.

"Then can you think of any way that I can get rid of her a while? I listen for her every minute when she is not here. There! I'll bet a thousand dollars that's she on the 'phone now." For a bell was jangling.

Jennie opened the door.

"Miss Ferbush, she is on the 'phone, ma'am."

"I won't go," said Claribel.

DALTON went out. She heard his voice, low, precise, formal. He laughed once or twice.

When he came back, he took up the conversation where it had been left off.

"No, Claribel; I see no sense in an expensive trip for no reason at all."

"Dalton, do you like having her here all the time?"

"I don't object. It was your plan."

"I know. But I'm tired of it."

"She is the best friend you have. You are childish."

"Couldn't I ask her to come less often? Or you explain——"

"Certainly not!"

"Dalton, she wears my clothes without telling me. She asks questions all the time—where I've been, where I'm going and all that. She listens to what I say over the telephone. I think she reads my letters."

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Silence. "And I am tired of her. I want her to stay away until I get rested. She—she isn't truthful—or honest—and I want her to stay home." No answer. "Can't you say anything that will help?"

"No."

"Then I know I will do something unpleasant. I'm tired of her, I tell you."

"She is a very good friend. Let me hear no more of it, Claribel."

CLARIBEL had every intention of sulking, but the morning was crisp and she changed her mind. She thought Dalton looked astonished when she came into the breakfast-room, a scarlet-velvet toque at the best angle, a dark-fur coat trailing over her arm.

"I am going to ride down-town with you and stay out of doors a long time to get some of the kinks blown out of me," she announced.

If only he would look like that all the time, his gray eyes smiling!

He reached across the table and put his hand on hers.

"You are very sweet, my dear."

"Only occasionally. Much of the time I am deadly. Selfish and—er—childish, you know. But I don't nag—do I, Dalton?"

"No, dear."

"Do you?"

"I hope not."

"I hope not, too. But you are awfully set in your ways. I should have been in this family long ago and maybe straightened you out."

"It was no family at all until you were in it, my dear."

"That's a nice speech," she approved. "You might make love rather well if you tried. Not to me. I'm an old story, and no one makes love well to an old story. But some one new—you'd do it nicely, I think."

She drove down beside him. He looked at her constantly—a flaming, small personality that belonged to him. His eyes held their smiling light all the way down.

But Claribel's high spirits departed before she reached home. She told the man to drive her to Miss Sophie Strong's house. Miss Strong depressed her, and she reasoned that on a depressed day she would notice it less. Why spoil a bright day with her sister-in-law?

Miss Strong kissed Claribel and patted her cheek.

"A great deal of brightness to come to a dull old woman," she said.

"I am always afraid of disturbing you. You are always so busy."

"It's what keeps me alive. I pity those who are not busy about worth-while things. You, child—are you busy in your way?"

"No. I'm very idle, I think."

The old woman looked at her sharply.

"It's telling on you. Interest, child—interest—big, absorbing—that's the only thing if you have a mind. Many people haven't. They cumber the earth. Does something trouble you? I wish you would look upon me in a more intimate way, Claribel. Is there anything you could tell me?"

"Oh—no," murmured Claribel.

"Yes. Speak freely. Is it Dalton? My brother can do wrong as well as other brothers. Is it Dalton, child?"

"N-o-o."

"Yes, it is. In what way? Shall I guess it? His—thrifty habits? They spoil him sometimes. Do you feel them?"

Claribel hesitated.

"In little ways, Miss Sophie. In the big things he is so good."

"It is true. Can't you think of it as a trait that must not spoil him? Can't you grow used to it? I did. I haven't got it myself. I don't think money. He does. I suppose it's a lesser flaw than many."

"Oh, yes, yes! I am already nearly used to it, and go right along as if it were not there."

"Exactly. And any time you are a little short in your own spending-money—to have in your pocket, you know, just speak to me. I wonder if I had not better make you a monthly allowance—enough to keep your purse jingling—to spend for foolish things you don't want to speak about."

"Oh, dear Miss Sophie—no, no!"

"It's better than for you to ask for it. It will amuse me to do it. I shall like it. No, no—don't say a word. Will that clear you of the little dulness you brought in, child?"

"It wasn't all that."

"Can't you tell me?"

A year earlier it would have seemed incredible to Claribel to sit into the corner of Miss Strong's stiff sofa and talk freely.

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She told of Antoinette Ferbush. The old woman stiffened at the name.

"A vicious woman, child. I have known it from the first. No companion for you. I don't wonder you are fretted. It must end. She must resume her position as casual friend."

"I don't know how to do it, Miss Strong."

"Dalton will arrange it."

"No, he won't. I asked him. I told him how I felt."

"And what did he say?"

"That she is my best friend and that I am selfish and childish."

Miss Strong took off her spectacles and polished them carefully.

"Um-m-m," she said, and, "Um-m-m" again, after she had put them on. She stared at Claribel. "Then do it yourself. I would be delighted to do it; I don't know anything I would like better. But it would be meddling. Take your stand, child. Tell her frankly how you feel. If she is the right kind, she will accept; if she is not the right kind, she will be angry and abuse you. But in either case you will be free from her."

Miss Strong was mistaken. For that night, after Claribel had tried several times, Antoinette interrupted her.

"What are you trying to do, Claribel? Tell me that you want to take back your invitation to make myself free here? Well, it won't do. There is no reason for it. It means a great deal to me and nothing to you. The world owes me something. I've had a hard time, and if it makes me comfortable to come here, why shouldn't I do it? Why should I stay in my ugly rooms because you have taken a notion? I am as much entitled to be comfortable as you are. You need not have asked me to come. You did. I accepted, and it is still an acceptance. I like it here. I like your house, your bed, your food. I am happy here, and I am entitled to be happy. I shall make no change in my way of doing."

Claribel heard her, a few moments later, laughing shrilly in the living-room.

It seemed odd that Tony should talk to her that way—that she should be so sure of her position in that house.

ANTOINETTE defying Claribel was one person; the Miss Ferbush who appeared at dinner that night was another. She came in quietly, took her seat with a slight inclination of her head and a murmured something. She did that sort of thing well. She had poise, dignity, an air of immediate royalty when she chose. And it harmonized physically, too—the Tony of blowing hair, high voice and shrill laugh stepped aside when she chose for the Tony of delicacy and grace. That night she wore a black gown that did not just quite slip from her shoulders; her hair lay glossy, close to her head. She sat down droopingly. Claribel's pulsing, colorful youth looked impertinent beside Tony's languor.

The dinner spirit was dull. Claribel slipped away after it, and Tony turned suddenly to Dalton as they sat by the great fireplace.

"Dalton, sometimes it strikes me hard how very alone I am. It struck me tonight."

He moved to look at her.

"You are pretty lucky in many ways. You are an independent, attractive young woman. You can do as you like. And you are mighty smart to take care of yourself. That's a pretty frock. Isn't it rather nice to have earned it yourself?"

"No. For all the time I keep fearing the future. If I spend money for this, won't I need it for bread or something? Suppose I should be sick. I'm frightened at the future much of the time."

"You needn't be. We are back of you."

"Claribel isn't back of me." He did not answer. She leaned forward and touched his wrist. "Don't say she is."

"Well, I'm back of you."

She took her hand from his wrist to clutch the arm of his chair and put her head down upon it. The satiny back of her neck was close; the curve of her bosom which the loose shoulder-strap revealed heaved slightly.

Tony, not audacious, weeping or nearly so, struggling very prettily with emotion, was a new thing. As an old friend, Mr. Strong put his arm across her bare shoulders.

"Now, look here, Tony; you are a fine girl. Claribel is wilful sometimes. I'm not wilful, and I mean what I say. I'm back of you."

She shook her head.

"You couldn't be unless she was."

"Oh, yes, I could. I'm your friend. I've liked seeing you making good. A man likes

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John brought out her bag; Dalton fastened her coat under her chin. Dr. Holden did not appear.

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a woman who plays her game and wins it. Not many girls can do what you have done."

She sat up and ran her fingers through her hair; some loose strands curled out crisply. He smiled.

"There you are—more like the Tony I know. Yes; I've liked to see you play your game. Men like that."

"Oh, yes. They like to watch a girl fight to success. They like to look on; but that's all."

"How do you mean?"

"It's the other kind of girl they want for themselves—not the capable one. What they want is the girl who doesn't know anything. They want no brains at all. Goodness knows what their idea is, but they want the helpless girl for theirs. Then they look on at a distance at the girl who plays her game alone. She's commendable—not desirable."

He laughed.

"That's like you. Go ahead and revile us. It's better than to see you as you were to-night all through dinner."

"How was I?"

"I don't know. Different. Needing to be looked after. Not reliant. It puzzled me."

"Puzzled you? What did you care?"

"I care a great deal, my dear girl. Your pluck failed you to-night. Tell me why."

Tony put out a hand toward him, and he took it. She was close; the house was still—they might have been a million miles from any one. The firm hand was warm, her fingers, too, and they pressed his slightly.

"The usual Tony," she said slowly, "would scoff at you, would say that I was just a filler of time, an amusement, some one who talked much and felt little—a flippant, spiteful girl who said sharp things. That's your usual Tony, isn't it?" He nodded. "The Tony to-night is different, and she's the real one, Dalton—the one that no one loves, and she is so hurt about it that she talks louder and scoffs harder. She's the Tony who might be real all the time if—any one had cared, had offered her happiness. Just the happiness of sitting beside some one who cared." He did not know exactly what to say; so he said nothing. "Happiness of sitting with some one who cared. Suppose you had liked me, had wanted me here like this, instead of finding me smart and amusing and game. Then you would have had the real girl, as I have been to-night. Every bit of love and truth and loyalty is all smashed to bits under my smartness, my gameness, my ability to make good and take care of myself. And what would I have given for the joy of being myself— Well, a man could never understand."

She was new, different, earnest. He met her as she then was.

"I never thought of you as wanting to be taken care of. But maybe I was stupid not to see."

"Yes; you were stupid—not to see."

"You would have kept a man interested. Why don't you show yourself as you are?"

"Why should I?"

"Let some other man know what you have told me—see what you really are. Let some other man understand."

She lifted his hand with both hers and put her lips down to it.

"There is no other man," she said slowly.

Then she sprang to her feet and crowded her hands over her mouth. He rose, too, and stepped toward her.

"Why did you let me say that?" she demanded through her fingers. "You had no business to let me say that."

"You—what did you mean?"

"Nothing. I meant nothing."

He turned to fling his cigar into the fire.

"No, no!" he said nervously. "Of course you meant nothing."

She crossed the few steps that separated them.

"I meant just one thing, and why should I care if you know it? I don't care. I'm proud of it. I meant that there is no man in the world but you. There has never been any other man. Let me tell it. You hadn't guessed it, had you? When a woman like me turns her heart inside out, it means something. She must be game to do it—especially to a man who doesn't care."

DALTON had never read romances; nothing had ever paralleled this scene in his experience. He was aghast, unbelieving, embarrassed, flattered. The door at the end of the room clicked. Tony stepped back instantly. Jennie Dry looked in with an unswerving stare.

"I beg yer pardon, sir. 'Twas that quiet I thought ye was out." She closed the door again gently.

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The interruption had cleared away the fog for him. He had been bewildered by her words, her soft flesh, the silence and nearness. The fog slid away; habit was revealed again.

"There, there!" he said, still flattered and surprised, but quite himself. "There, there, Tony! Never mind."

She was quick to note the difference. She turned away, then came back to him.

"Will it make any difference—what I have just said?"

"No difference at all."

"Does it make you like me less—or better?"

He hesitated briefly.

"Better."

"And may I stay on here?"

"Of course—of course, my dear!"

"And you will not tell—any one?"

"Tony! Do you think I will?"

"It's our secret, then? It's rather nice to have a secret with you—even one that makes you despise me."

"It doesn't do that."

"Sure?"

Again the fog gathered dimly.

"Perhaps I like it better than I realize. I have not so much love myself, you know."

Steps came through the adjoining room; the cough was Jennie's.

"Good-night," said Tony softly.

"Good-night." And Mr. Strong turned his attention to a smoking bit of coal.

Tony went swiftly up the stairs, closed her door behind her and leaned against it. Then she laughed long and triumphantly.

CLARIBEL had food for thought during the following weeks. Life was not clear. To be married was a dreary thing enough. She felt detached, alone, serious. It annoyed her that Tony had a careless, confident air as she came as usual. Claribel accepted it. Their scene together seemed unreal. Then, too, she was a trifle curious about Dalton. Occasionally he was gay. Much of the time a little excited.

She watched him one evening. He had improved since his marriage, had filled out angles, was, if possible, more immaculate in his dress. She was glad that, if she had married at all, it had been to a man completely creditable, entirely well bred, who knew so well what to do under all conditions. She was proud of him in an observer sort of way, not as possessor. Sometimes he was restful, always dependable.

She had few letters from her mother. Aunt Florence was coming home soon, and Mrs. True would come, too. Claribel felt a thrill at the thought of her mother's return. She did not need her any more, but she would like to ask her about some of the questions that puzzled—what life expected of one—where happiness lay—in joys that stung, or level ease of mind. Her mother knew.

Then there was Grant Holden. He was a constant evasion, a constant seeking. She was pulled by strings to where he was and pulled by strings away. He loved her. He said so every minute she was with him. He never stopped. Perhaps it was dangerous—this stepping-aside that he might speak words to keep her company until she saw him again. Dangerous? Was it? She would tell it all straight out to her mother, and perhaps do what her mother advised.

Then she had a letter from Paris. Mrs. True said:

DEAR CLARIBEL:

I am going to be married—rather than come home. You are surprised. But when he asked me and Aunt Florence had already got out the trunks, I was glad enough to say, "Yes." I cannot tell you how I dreaded coming back to the old crowd that always wondered. And the tradespeople—I would rather face death than face Higgins, the coal man—though he is really paid up; but, my dear, it was like taking my own blood to do it. So I was very glad to stay here.

Of course if you had not been quite safe and happy, I would have come. But, thank God, Claribel, you are safe. Dalton is sure. He will never fail you.

You must come over soon. Won't it be fine to visit me in my own house where I shall be free from worries? He is not very rich, but he has a comfortable house, pretty, too, at Oxford. He's English, you see. A friend of your father's people, and they are very nice about it. They have been exceedingly kind to me, and, of course, they are as anxious as I that the past stay dead. They are anxious to see you. Now that you are married, there would be no complication about the name. It looks like happiness, Claribel. He is dependable, like Dalton. I need it as well as you. We are alike in that; we must depend upon some one. I should be afraid of what would become of you if you had married a man who failed you. But you are safe and so, my dear, am I. He is Algernon Barclay. Four years older than I—student, gentleman.

I may not have been a very good mother, Claribel, but I was always so worried.

Your very satisfied and safe

MOTHER.

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It was an astonishing thing! She ran down-stairs with the letter. Dalton was just coming in, but Tony was with him. She wanted to tell him alone, see him read how dependable he was. She tucked the letter into the front of her dress.

She was eager and excited all through dinner. Tony and Dalton went into the living-room and Claribel caught Jennie's arm.

"I shall burst if I don't tell some one!" she cried. "Jennie, my mother is going to be married. Be glad, Jennie! She's had a hard time. Be glad Jennie!"

"I'm glad if ye are, ma'am."

"Oh, I am, and Mr. Strong will be, too. I'm dying to tell him—as soon as she goes. There—I think I hear her going up-stairs."

But Tony had not gone up-stairs. Claribel opened the living-room door. It slid back noiselessly. Just across the room stood Dalton, Tony leaning against his shoulder, one arm white across his breast. He was holding her closely.

Claribel stood for an instant, then stepped back. Again the door slid noiselessly. It closed upon the scene.

WHEN Claribel softly closed the door, shutting from her view her husband and Antoinette Ferbush, she went at once to her room. Her first emotion was amazement. Her first impulse was to laugh at the absurdity of Dalton's having what appeared to be a romance, and with—of all people—Tony, who was hard as nails.

She laughed. What tremendous liars they were! Was no one honest? She would have staked everything on his honesty.

What should she do about it? Nothing. Why should she? Hadn't she contemplated the same thing for herself?

She would say nothing. Let them continue their philanderings that were so silly. She didn't care. But there was the result! She should not feel the same again. Dalton had done this thing. He couldn't get away from it. She need not look up to him any more. She would not feel that she need protect his name any more.

So that was why he had so little sympathy when she complained of Tony. Well, it set her free, anyhow. That was one of the results. She had been pretty decent, for it was not ridiculous at her age to want romance. That was what youth was for. She could now do as she liked; she had stuck awfully tight to recording only proper things for fear she should be sorry. Now she could make some records herself.

She reached for the telephone on her desk. Maybe he would be at his club. It was only ten o'clock.

"Is Dr. Holden there?" she asked.

As she waited, she said aloud to herself: "It's going down—this thing I'm doing. I can't get it back. Nor its results——"

Then it was his voice answering,

"This is Dr. Holden."

"It's Claribel," she said.

"Oh! Glad to hear from you." Of course there were people around, but he needn't have been quite so short. "What did you want?" he asked casually, as she hesitated.

"I just want to say that it's an awfully fine night—moonlight."

"Yes."

"And early."

"Yes."

"And I am doing nothing."

"Yes."

"And it's not very cold."

"No."

His brain was working evidently, and his businesslike voice said:

"I'll be glad to stop for you. I'll pick you up in fifteen minutes at the library. Oh, no trouble at all, George."

She couldn't help what would have been a giggle a year before. He played a quick game, didn't he? He wrote down history very fast. Let him.

"All right," she said.

"No trouble at all," he repeated, and she hung up the receiver.

A roomful of men could not have guessed. Clever, wasn't he? Her heart was thumping. This was the life, then!

She took a dark cloak from her closet. Then she stopped, for steps were coming along the hall—Dalton's steps. He was through early with his love-making. Would he have the inconceivable impertinence to knock at her door after that? He did not. He passed on, and she heard his door close. Short sessions of love! She laughed scornfully. They had made it easy for her.

She pulled a soft hat down over her hair, locked her door from the outside and fled down the stairs. Glowing moonlight lay like white bands across the walk from the

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door—too white and glowing by far! She turned off the walk into the shrubbery; it was a short cut, anyway, and by all means have short cuts to—happiness. That was what it was alleged to be. She'd try it and see. She had no longer any one to hold her back by dignity and loyalty. She could be silly, too, if she liked.

An arm reached out of the bushes and grasped her shoulder—a strong arm against which she could not move. She was too frightened to scream. The person holding her spoke.

"Where ye goin', young baby, at this time?"

"Jennie!" gasped Claribel. "You scared me almost to death! What do you mean?"

"I mean, where ye goin' this time o' night?"

Claribel shook her shoulder, and Jennie released it.

"It doesn't make any difference where I am going, Jennie," she said, with dignity. "You have no business out here."

"I've spent many a night where I'd no business t'be. I'm standin' by ye, young baby that ye are. Where ye goin'?"

"Take your hand off me!" said Claribel, flaming. "I can step out of my own house if I like at any hour."

"That's what ye can't do. Ye're not safe *now*. Ye're the one as has no right t'be out here. Go back, or I'll pick ye up an' carry ye in. Ye'll take no step outer these grounds t'-night."

"How do you dare talk to me like this?"

"I dare anythin' for ye, young baby. I'll stan' between ye an' danger long as I've breath. Ye can't stop me. I know. I was through the piece m'se'f. We women is like as peas, whether we're high or low. Might as well go on back; there's no chanct fer ye t'get outer here t'-night. My God, child, let me pertect, won't ye? Ye got t'let me. I don't ask ye. I say ye shall! Go back. Ye sha'n't leave 'less I go with ye. Go back!"

"Do you think I will allow you——"

"It's no question of allowin'. It's allowed. Ye can't move me by a hair. Ye don't go outer here 'less I go, too. I know. Go back!"

Claribel felt like crying. She was the mistress and Jennie the servant, but the servant's hand was strong and heavy.

"To be impertinent to me, Jennie, after all I have done for you!" she said weakly.

"It's because o' that, child. I'd give m' life if ye could use it. Glad to. But ye can't hurt yerse'f an' me know. Now, ye go back. It's no place for ye."

There was the sound of an opening window. Their voices might have been heard. Jennie turned her gently toward the house.

"Fer God's sake, lambie! It means so much," she whispered.

Yes; it might mean a great deal—Claribel was sure of that. Jennie followed her to the house and to her room, took her cloak and hat and put them away. Claribel did not speak to her. Jennie unhooked her gown, unfastened the lacy underthings, put her night-dress over her head, put her gently into a chair and drew off her shoes and stockings—all without a word. She put her lips to Claribel's white instep.

"Fergive ole Jennie, darlin'. I had t' do it."

Claribel pulled away her foot and did not answer. She was angry, mortified, indignant. The only comfort was that Dr. Holden would be angry, too. It would have given him a mighty advantage if she had kept her tryst. What was it they said about women who call men up at their clubs? Before Jennie had finished brushing her hair she was reconciled and not sorry that she had been prevented from taking that long step on the road of foolishness. But she would not tell Jennie so.

"Good-night, darlin'," said the woman lingering.

"Good-night. You are not going to lock me in or anything, I suppose?"

Jennie made an inarticulate murmur, hesitated, looked longingly at Claribel's hard little face and turned away.

CLARIBEL crawled into bed and lay there thinking. It was a good thing that Jennie had been there. She was glad of it. Old faithful Jennie, whose eyes had been dripping tears when she went out. She had been unkind to old Jennie.

"I'm a se'fish thing," said Claribel into her pillows. "I am only caring about Dalton and Tony becau:e it hurts my pride. I think that is all I care about. I did a brazen thing to get even. Then I hurt Jennie's feelings. I suppose she is crying this minute. No one else would take the trouble to watch me. It would make

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her happy if I went to her room and told her it was all right. And Jennie has so little. Nothing but me."

She got out of bed, put on slippers and a robe over her night-dress. She opened her door softly to run down the hall and up to the third floor to tell Jennie not to cry.

Just at the foot of the stairs there was a row of casement windows opening upon one of the balconies. Steps led from it to the terrace below.

Through the glass the last of the moonlight was lying, the dark of the hall a frame for what the light painted outside—the dropping silver ball. Claribel hesitated, a small surge of emotion swelling her throat—such beauty wasted on a world of foolish people! She put her hand upon the hasp of the window and leaned there, all her problems waking again and stirring. A noise behind made her start, and the hasp in her fingers clanked back noisily into place. Something had moved at the door of Antoinette's room. It was ajar, and she crossed to it.

"Tony," she whispered through the aperture. "Tony, was it you?"

There was no reply and she whispered again, "Tony."

Again no reply, and the sound of soft even breathing. It was the wind, then; Tony was asleep.

The morning sun lay across the cheery glass room where breakfasts were. Claribel was not down; Miss Ferbush, alone, looked at Jennie.

"Lower your voice next time you bring Mrs. Strong in from the garden." There was no reply, but a gleam like steel was in the servant's eyes. "Did you hear what I said, Jennie?"

"I hear nothin' that ye says at any time, miss."

Miss Ferbush's quick temper surged.

"How dare you be impertinent to me?"

Jennie sniffed.

Dalton Strong came in; there was question in his eyes. Tony hesitated; she knew she had better let things alone, but she was angry.

"I was telling Jennie not to speak so loudly to Claribel in the garden at night."

"She was not in the garden, sir."

Tony gasped.

"I saw you both there."

"She was not outer the house, sir."

Dalton Strong was as nearly frowning as his courtesy allowed him.

"It doesn't matter, Tony. You may go, Jennie."

Tony came to him swiftly, slipped a hand through his arm and leaned upon it.

"I did not want to bother you, Dalton dear."

"It does not bother me."

Tony laughed, still ruffled.

"How that woman lied! What possessed her?"

"Did she lie?"

"Of course she did! It was rather magnificent to face me down to protect her. Oh, what must a woman be who must be shielded by a servant's lies!"

Dalton turned. The movement took Tony's arm from beneath his.

"Just what are you meaning?"

"Claribel was slipping out, and Jennie made her come back. I saw them. And then to say she was not out! But you didn't believe her?"

"Yes; I believe her."

"That Claribel was not out?"

"Yes."

Tony's face was scarlet; in a sane moment she would have known better.

"You believe! She went out to meet Grant Holden! And, more—do you remember, before you were married, the night she was not home and I said she was with me? She was with him. At his house. Until morning. Ask her. That's the sort she is! And you freeze me—" She had fastened her fingers into his coat sleeve. He took them away by force and stepped back. "And ask her," shrilled Miss Ferbush, "who she let out by the terrace window early this morning. I'll swear to it! Now do you stand by her?"

The door opened, and Jennie Dry stood in it.

"Jennie," said Dalton Strong, "tell Gilbert to bring the car around for Miss Ferbush. And you may help her if she needs you. She is leaving immediately."

THE months slipped by, and no explanation was made to Claribel of Tony's absence. Dalton never spoke of her, and that, in itself, was suspicious. It was odd for Tony to have gone away suddenly. She had no reason to think that Dalton was

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seeing her elsewhere. And she did not worry about it.

There were constant casual meetings with Grant Holden; she held aloof from arranged ones, though she thought she had a right to take them if she chose.

"What's the matter with you?" Holden asked one day, as they met, omitting the usual greetings. It seemed as if he cared. She liked it.

"There is nothing the matter.

"Then why look as if there were? Where are you going?"

She named a mountain village not far away, at whose fashionable hotel she spent occasional week-ends. It was a two hours' run by train.

"Dalton going?"

"No. He has gone to New York until Monday.

"I saw him five minutes ago on Cedar Street."

Cedar Street was where Tony Ferbush lived. Dalton had left home to take the ten-o'-clock train; it was then mid-afternoon.

She felt her face grow hot.

"Oh, well," she said; "he goes when he is ready."

"Does he know where you are going?"

"Of course."

"Is he coming up there for you?"

"No. And why all the questions?"

"My car is here at the station. Let me drive you up. We can be there nearly as soon as the train. Would you like to?"

"Oh, I don't know," she demurred. "I think not."

"Of course you should have consulted Dalton, but as he is in the city——"

"It is not necessary to consult him. I was just wondering if I wanted to. I can do as I please."

"Then decide to go by motor. I'd be very happy. The world is not full of happiness, my dear girl."

"No, it isn't," said Claribel hotly. "Yes; I'll go."

If he had seemed to particularly exult, she might have refused. But he did not seem to care much. He helped her into the car without smiling.

"Why so sober?" he asked, as they ran down the street from the station to the long stretch of country road that would take them through valley and up stiff climbs into solitude.

"I was thinking how alone I am."

"Not complimentary. I am here."

"That should be a great delight."

"Claribel, don't try to be world-weary—it doesn't suit your style."

"It is not a pose. I am learning how people act."

"Worrying about some one in particular?"

"No."

"Quite through worrying about me, I suppose."

"Did I ever worry about you?"

He increased the speed sharply.

"Can't you be natural?"

"What do you mean by 'natural?' "

"As you used to be."

"Which time?" She laughed.

"Well—for instance, the time you came to me in the mountains. I dream about that. I wake up thinking of your sweetness that night."

"It isn't kind to remind me how I flung myself down your throat."

He did not deny that she had done that. He said:

"And it was the undiluted you—the genuine, the natural, the primitive you. Coming to me for happiness! Where do you go for happiness now, my dear?"

"Silly question!"

"You haven't found much, I dare say."

"I dare say not."

"It's your due, your right—my due, my right."

"You have it, haven't you?"

"No. But I shall keep on trying."

"How?"

"By asking you for it."

"Or some one else."

"There is no one else." He took one hand from the steering-wheel and put it over hers. She turned to look at him, not flushing, not smiling, but soberly curious. "I have learned," he went on, still with his hand over hers, "that we have the right to take happiness when it comes—no matter how. If we do not take it, we are punished. I didn't take it. So I am going along, whining in my heart for you. Joy is a right. Only fools let it be pushed aside."

THERE was silence; some miles raced past. Then he said in a business-like tone:

"You cared a lot for me once, Clarie. Has

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it all gone? Don't try to be smart. Be yourself. Do you still like me?"

"Yes."

"Do you love me, Clarie?"

"I don't know. Watch the car!"

They were close to the edge, climbing slowly, the engine pounding—bald rock wall on one side, sharp pitch down on the other.

He drove on silently. In the valley below the sun had lain yellow-warm; up there, where the water-drip trickled from high above and where there was no sun, it was chill—green-brown shadows over them.

In a hollowed-out space where a spring gushed there was room for down-bound vehicles to pass. He drew into the space and stopped.

"We'll cool the engine a bit," he said.

Motorists were cared for there; he took a can hanging by the spring, brought water, commented upon the need of it. She looked out over the tree-tops. One tree had a red stroke painted across it—the first fall mark—no sound but his steps back and forth to the spring, to the machine. She closed her eyes. Peace! Was it because it was out of doors? She didn't care if they never moved on. Such divine peace! Was it because of slipping summer and stillness? No; hardly all that. To be quite honest, hardly that. Here she was again—a fool! But he had said that only fools evaded happiness. Was this a happiness? If not, then it was nearly like it. She drew a long, tight, slow breath.

He came round to her side of the car, and she opened her eyes.

"Claribel, I always have told you I loved you—never as I do now. I am amazed at myself for feeling it. Clarie, do you love me? Don't be ashamed to say it—do you?"

"Yes."

"Better than any one in the world?"

"Yes—I think so."

He put his arm about her shoulders and his lips on hers.

"Now are you sure of it?"

"Yes."

He got into the car and did not speak again during the climb. When they reached the top, he said,

"You want me to take you to the Bristol Hotel."

"Yes."

"There are plenty of people you know there. It is not closed yet."

"Well?"

"Why not go to Skylight Inn instead? There will be no one there. They are closing Sunday."

"Why should I go there?"

"Because I could stay there, too." She turned and looked at him. He caught her hands. "Little love—happiness is here—what there is left of it for us. A few hours out of a lot of life—wouldn't you like it?"

"No."

"Why not? Because you don't like me, or because you are a coward? Look here, Clarie; I tell you happiness is scarce. This chance is given us—to see each other for a day. The chance may not come again."

"It should never have come."

"Don't preach. What's the harm? Just to be happy. No one will know or care. We are not cheating Dalton. He would not care if he knew."

"That doesn't make it any better."

"Yes."

"No."

"This was not planned—we did not know we were to meet. Something arranged this. There's meaning in it. Let's take this. We have been checker-boarded about long enough."

"Every one is."

"Until they see. What are we given wills for—and wants—and loves? Clarie, what are we given loves for?" He drove slowly, one arm across her shoulders. "There's Skylight up there. See? There's a view straight down the valley. I want you to see it. Look! Doesn't it seem as near heaven as we shall ever get?"

She did not answer. Dusk settled. The first of the afterglow streaked up.

"How brave are you, Clarie!"

Again she did not answer. She sat still, warm, cool, calm, thrilling. Streams of amber struck up from the west; rose color flaunted; a dull crimson came from nowhere and overlay the others.

And when he turned the car toward Skylight, she still did not speak.

SKYLIGHT INN stood high—rambling, aloof, lying against the sky.

As Dr. Holden had said, she would not know any one there; it was not the Dalton Strong class that frequented it. Just across the valley she could see the Bristol—twenty miles by motor—but it seemed so close that

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she had a flash of fear that she might be recognized from the veranda.

As he also had said, the season was over. The wide veranda was deserted; she sat down there, her bag at her feet. Dr. Holden went inside.

She rocked slowly. Was she Claribel Strong? Why was she doing this thing? To be not a coward? Because she loved this man? To show him she was game?

Dr. Holden came out.

"I have the best room in the house for you," he said excitedly. "Right off the parlor here. More view than you could understand in a month. We can have dinner in half an hour. Isn't this a lark? There's a full moon to-night. Here, John; take the lady's bag."

His fingers clung to hers as she rose. At the door of the parlor she stopped suddenly.

"I know those people," she said quickly.

A group of women stopped chattering to stare; recognition was rampant.

"The devil! Are you sure?"

Claribel must pass the group on the way to her room. She thought she did it well—perhaps a little too much grand lady in her voice.

"How do you do, Mrs. Lee? Mrs. Plank, how do you do? It's lovely here, isn't it? Are you leaving? Not for a day or two? Nor I. Yes; it's perfect."

Even with the knowledge that they were whispering about her, Claribel could not feel that the situation was real. She looked at it from afar and wondered how it was all to come out—this mix-up that Claribel Strong had got herself into.

She washed her face and hands, banded her hair. In a half-realized effort to submerge those Lees and Planks in her position, she put on the best gown she had in her bag—a black, crystal-beaded one, that left her shoulders and arms bare. It was too ballroom-like for the place, but they would not know it—those Lees and others.

Dr. Holden was on the veranda.

"Who are the cats?" he grumbled.

"Mrs. Lee lives second door from me. Knows me as well as you do. Mrs. Plank belongs to our own country club."

"The devil she does!"

"Hangs on by her finger-tips, but this will send her up—to be able to tell a quite new scandal. Another woman—I don't remember her name—her husband has the Star Fruit and Provisions—Sea-Food of All Kinds. He and mother disagreed about a bill. So there are three layers of people to be entertained when they get home."

"Don't you really care, Claribel? You sound as if you did not."

"Why care? It's done—isn't it?"

"It's a damn shame!"

She shrugged her shoulders. There were red spots on her cheeks.

THE night was great and splendid, the moon lifting like a ball, not flat against the sky. He showed her the garden at the back, the road by which they had come, glinting white here and there, the specking lights of the Bristol, the mountain ranges black against a lighted sky. He kissed her. He said words that had held her long before.

"I must go in," she said at last desperately. "It wouldn't matter if there were three moons; I can't think of anything but those women. They are waiting for me. They want to see me come in. I must go. I can't bear it!"

He let her go impatiently, yet lingeringly.

She ran the gantlet of the women again; they did not give her a chance to smile that time. Their eyes were upon their cards.

Claribel closed her door and locked it. Then she unlocked it and laughed aloud. She had no right to lock her door. Such women as she did not lock doors.

She took off her gown fiercely, dropped it on the floor and walked upon it. How long would they stay—those women on guard outside?

One of her windows faced the narrow valley. She sat down on the sill in the dark.

Well, she had done it—hadn't she? Verified all the promise of her heritage—taken every worthless bit of her father, every touch of selfishness her mother had claimed. It couldn't be steered away from a heritage like hers. Seemed a pity, too, after she had been warned. She recalled how her mother had talked to her the day of her marriage, had told her that she had a lot to combat.

And, knowing all that, she had deliberately acted, and she understood that Claribel Strong, who had had no bringing-up at all, had taken the step of an outcast.

"Hm-m-m." She swayed back and forth on the sill. Was it, then, not really her

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fault? Was this blocked out for her? Had she been helpless? Yes; she thought she had.

But hardly so. She was strong and had a mind of her own. What was there about heredity to sway one who had a mind and who had been warned? If she had not been warned——

Then there was Dalton and Tony. She had a right to do the same—to go as far as she liked. How far did she like? She glanced at the unlocked door.

But it did not matter. Love was all there was. Those women outside—they were ordinary; they had not thought out problems as he had. He said that love was all, convention nothing. He knew. He had thought about it.

She veered back to Dalton; that was unreasonable, for he had failed her. But had he? Somehow she couldn't quite believe it, though memory was sharp of what she had seen. Did that give her the right to throw herself away?

Yes; it probably did. Reduced to arguments and excuses, it stood—that she was powerless to combat heredity, that Dalton was doing the same thing. She sat and pondered. She no longer heard voices from the parlor. She waited, clasped her bare shoulders with cold hands. Waited.

But no matter heredity, no matter Dalton; she was writing down her history. Fast, too. She could never get back what she had written that day. It was eternal, and all she should write would be eternal, too.

She stood up. She put her fingers to the tiny ribbon that held the lace about her shoulders, tore it apart. Not that it was tight—just to tear it.

Writing down. With good excuses, writing down her history to stand forever. No! She did not want anything more of this—to go down! No matter excuses. She did not want it to go down!

She ran across the room, turned the key, slid the bolt and flung herself against the door to hold it shut by her own strength—tight—tighter—in case the locks were not enough.

DR. HOLDEN had no such conflict. He was flaming. He had won at last. How had he happened to say the right, the inducing words? No woman had ever held him away so long. Of course that was why he so desperately desired her. It would pass—the blaze. Very well. Let it. It had not passed yet."

He cursed the giggling group in the parlor, because of which he was, for the moment, denied her.

He lit a cigar and took a path white in the moonlight. The path skirted the edge of the cliff; there was a bench just where a short-cut trail pitched down to meet the distant road. He looked down at its zigzag course—water-washed, eh? Nearly impassable, overgrown with tangled blackberry bushes that reached across it. He knew it well—once he had climbed it when not as bad as this, and his scratches had been deep and healed slowly.

He sat long on the bench. Twice he walked back toward the hotel to see the lighted windows and moving shapes inside, then returned to the bench. He sat loungingly—smoked, smiled.

Something cracked smartly down the path. He looked, but could see nothing. But the snapping sound came again. Some one was climbing the mountain along the overgrown trail—he'd be well scratched. He waited. Unless the climber was strong, he'd need a hand at the last, where the rains had washed.

Prudence suggested that he go. But it was no crime to be smoking and admiring nature. He stood and could see the bushes parted roughly. He peered down to see if he should call and offer a hand.

But the climber took the last steep pitch with a clutching, reckless grip. It was a woman.

She turned as she dragged herself to the top, and they stared at each other in the white light. She spoke first.

"The Lord he's guided me. He does that when the cause is big enough. Straight between her and you, He's put me. I figgered she was at the inn there—yer ole tricks. She's there, an' ye're here, an' I'm between." She was indeed between, blocking the narrow path with her big body. "By the Lord's grace," she said.

She was breathing hard, her face set. Her hair was ragged from the thorns.

"Get out of the way," he said, for she seemed a big and blocking thing.

She laughed.

"Don't ye worry about me gettin' outer the way."

He started to pass; she put out one arm.

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"No! Stay where ye are. I'm strong as ye."

"I'll try you out on strength if you like," he said angrily. "Get out of my way with your melodramatics."

She stepped back a pace.

"In case I mightn't be strong as ye—an' it was no time t' take a chanct—I got me ready." The light struck upon steel in her hand.

"Ridiculous! Are you going to shoot me?"

"If I have to."

"Ridiculous!"

"Oh, I'll do it. Don't ye think I won't. I'd care n'more for the killin' o' ye than the killin' of a little yeller dog, an' I'd feel sorrier fer the dog."

He knew that she meant it. He had no fancy to be part of a tragedy.

"Don't be so silly." He sat down on the bench indifferently. "What is the matter with you?"

"She's at the inn."

"Suppose she is. That's her business."

"No! She's not knowin' what it means."

He laughed.

"Don't you believe it!"

"Better ye don't get me any more wrought up than I am, Grant Holden."

He struck another match, smoked leisurely, looked off over the footing of tree-tops, black below. She did not speak again. She stood motionless within arm's length.

"Oh, come, now, Jennie," he said, after a time; "what is it to you?" She did not answer. "Come, now; what is it to you?"

"T'take care o' her."

"Suppose she does not want to be taken care of."

"She don't understand."

Another silence came. He tried to see the face of his watch. It must be late; the tinkle of the hotel piano had long since stopped. Into the silence Jennie Dry spoke.

"God A'mighty, what's it about ye—No; don't ye stir!"

He laughed, relieved. If he could get her to talk, he had a chance to convince her.

"Suppose you killed me, Jennie—or wounded me, for you are hardly the shot to kill, no matter how good your intention—how would making a scandal save her and her reputation? Your reasoning is wrong."

"I'd a shot ye, not because o' her and ye, but because o' me an' ye—settlin' the ole score, Grant Holden. Oh, yes; I'd go inter the past. I'd as soon tell it as not. How long's it ben, Grant Holden, sense I was clean enough fer m' own mountain folks? You tell. But o' course ye don't remember. I was uset t' never bein' seen nor spoke to, and then she was good t' me. She likes me. She's said so. An' there ain't no love in the world like mine fer her. There's no use talkin'. Set back!"

"Perhaps I love her too, Jennie." It was an effort to touch her by sentiment.

"Love!" she said. "There ain't no love in ye fer any woman. Set back!"

"What are you going to do?"

"Take her home in the mornin'."

"How did you know we were here?"

SHE did not reply. He asked the question at different times during the slow hours that she stood guard. He was undecided what position was least undignified for him. He had no doubt but she would do as she said. There was little chance of surprising her by a sudden rush, and she would follow him to the hotel, make a scene to rouse the house. It had been twenty years since he had spoken to Jennie Dry, but he had always felt her something of a menace. Had she been like the others, she would have left the mountains. But she had stayed—lived with her history. Once or twice he had met her on the roads—not that he cared, but he had always seen menace. It was at hand. Well—of necessity he must humor her. But he'd not give up. Jennie would not tell Strong; he would still have his power to influence Claribel. Rotten disappointment; but there was nothing to do about it.

It was cold. The hours were long. She stood through them. Once he began,

"Jennie——"

"Set back!" Her voice was loud. Too loud for that clear stillness; it would carry far. He sat back.

It was long since he had seen a sunrise. He saw it that morning, peeping, glowing, climbing among the trees above him. He remained silent until she spoke.

"I'm done with ye now, Grant Holden."

He rose stiffly. Below them lay a cleared sweep to the road. On that road a motor was coming swiftly. They both looked, and Jennie Dry stepped back among the trees.

"God A'mighty, it's him—the master!"

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She dropped the revolver into her pocket. "My job's done. Somebody else will manage it better than me."

CLARIBEL saw the car, too.

She had not left her room, but she had dressed and was leaning against the window-frame when the car came into sight. She watched it vaguely, and recognition came with a jump. He was coming for her! There could be no other reason for him to be there. How had he known?

Panic seized her. Should she run? Should she run from the house and drop off one of those cliffs so invitingly ready to solve problems? That was a coward's way. Whatever she might be, she would not be a coward.

She flung open the door and, without any decision in the making, walked through the parlor to meet him. She could hear his voice.

He was shaking hands with Mrs. Lee and saying something about meeting friends everywhere. He did not appear nervous, seemed to mean what he said. He saw her and said cheerfully:

"Well, Claribel, I failed you, didn't I? I could not quite make it up here last night. I hope Holden took care of you. Where is he?"

"I haven't seen him this morning."

How as usual he was—not agitated, not concerned, not anything but dignified, self-contained, courteous! He held out his hand to her, and she put hers into it. His was warm, firm, friendly.

"It's a bad thing to disappoint one's wife, Mrs. Lee. To agree to arrive at seven at night and arrive after that hour in the morning. It needs explanation, doesn't it, Claribel? Where did you say the doctor is?"

At that moment Claribel's eyes were on Dr. Holden. He was crossing the garden at the end of the veranda. She saw him stop, whirl, pass out of sight. Afraid? Didn't dare meet them? Afraid!

"Have you had breakfast, Clarie?"

"No."

"Then let's have some. I'm called to Albany. Do you want to go with me? If you like to stay here, Mrs. Lee will look after you. Going to-day, Mrs. Lee? Well, Dr. Holden will stay. We will ask him, if you want to wait here until to-morrow."

"I would rather go with you, Dalton."

"As you like. It's lonesome to see the closing of a hotel this way. I was afraid you were late coming up, but it was a temptation to wait for Dr. Holden, who knows the place so well. Let's find him and have our breakfast."

They did not find Dr. Holden. They ate their breakfast opposite the observant ladies. Dalton rallied Claribel on her lax appetite.

John brought out her bag; Dalton fastened her coat under her chin. Dr. Holden did not appear. Dalton Strong tucked the robe round Claribel's knees.

"The air has a snap of fall in it. Now, will you be quite warm?"

He swung slowly down the grade toward the steeper pitch of the road.

"Will you like the long ride in this open car, my dear? I can put you on the train for home if you would rather."

She stole a glance at him.

"I'll go with you, if you don't mind."

What in the world did he mean? Didn't he realize the situation? He had protected her royally from the Lees and the Planks, but he was not to keep it up—was he? Was he going further—protecting her from himself? She waited. He talked easily, naturally, drove with perfect steadiness.

It was an hour before she made up her mind about him. He was intending to ignore the situation. If it was because he did not care what she did any more—that was one thing. If he was just trying to spare her—that was another. She wouldn't bear that. She would not be shielded in that wholesale fashion. She'd pay. That was the smallest thing she could do.

"Dalton?"

"Yes?"

"How did you know I was there?"

"Jennie wired me."

"To New York?"

"Yes."

"And you—came back?"

"Of course."

"How did Jennie know?"

"I didn't ask her."

It was that he didn't care. Else he could not be so cool. Then she could speak.

"Dalton—it is that I could hardly help it. The taint—you know. Maybe it was that. Do you think it could have been that?" He did not reply. "You know what mother told you. You understood what was in me."

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Still no reply. "You know what I mean, Dalton?"

"No, dear."

"About my father—and about her. The mixture that is in me."

"No. I don't know."

She stared at him.

"You do. You must! You can't have forgotten. She told you. She said she did."

"I don't know what you mean, Claribel."

"But you must! Else I would not have married you. You do know!"

"Never mind, my dear. It doesn't matter."

"Doesn't matter! The bad streaks in me—that my name was not Claribel True—that she could have been charged with bigamy if any one had known."

"Never mind, Claribel; don't be so distressed."

"She said you knew. That she had told you and you didn't care."

"I would not have cared."

"And you did not know that he always did wrong—my father? That he never considered any one—made the family desperate—disgraced them? And poor mother—she was so glad when she heard he was dead. She wouldn't wait, either—she married again; he was very good—said I should be Claribel True. I remember him. And then father was not dead and came back. Poor mother—years and years she was afraid every time the door-bell rang. I didn't know till the day we were married. She said you knew and didn't care——"

"I do not care."

"No." Her voice broke. "It's too late to care now, I suppose. She lied to me. I thought it was because you knew that you are kind to me now. That you thought I could not help it. Dalton—is it an excuse? Heredity—it's that, isn't it? Do you believe in it?"

"No, Claribel; I don't."

"Don't believe in my—taint?"

"Not at all."

"You think I could have helped doing this?"

"Yes. Of course."

"And there is no excuse at all?"

"None at all, Claribel."

"Then why—why are you kind to me?"

"You would not understand the reason. See the river over there. You can just see it through the trees. Look!"

He did not care, and he was not interested! Incredible! But it must be so. Rather than have his house disturbed, touch his name with scandal, he was to ignore what she had done. If it had been for her sake, he could not help but show it—ask questions—be hurt—tortured. Not he! He was showing her the river, making it plain that what she had done was of no consequence to him. He had no emotion about it. He only wanted matters to slide along smoothly. He didn't care.

BACK in the big house, life proceeded upon its way. The Lees and the Planks had spoken—guardedly, but it was apparent that people had listened and were entertained.

She did not see Dr. Holden. His delayed journey was to be taken; it was understood that he would take up some medical study in Calcutta. His stay was indefinite; he might even settle in the East. He made no effort to see Claribel, sent no message. She was glad. She remembered how he had turned his back in the garden at Skylight and slipped out of sight. Afraid? Not a pleasant thought for a last one.

As to Tony—that was odd, too. She had gone away. The uncle had left a family that could use a housekeeper—one who would not work too hard and could establish an artistic basis. Miss Ferbush had taken to the idea.

Claribel went to see her when she heard it. There was a lot about Tony to connect with the past—her mother, a care-free, indifferent life with what she had supposed to be a vital love. So she went to see Tony. But Tony was out—her dingy cushions, her faded draperies, her footstools, her shabby wicker, piled ready for the second-hand man. She left a note asking her to come to dinner.

Tony did not reply to the note, nor did she come to dinner.

It was puzzling—the way the sure old things had slipped away—Dr. Holden gone because he was afraid; Tony because she needed nothing more; her mother because she was happier elsewhere. Claribel took odd times to think of it.

She considered it one night as she received guests, standing straight and slim—in blue-and-silver stuff that shimmered. She talked idly, merged her problems into the people about her.

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She could feel the curiosity. She turned sharply. Her husband was standing near, talking. She heard him laugh—nothing reserved about it—surely normal, casual, confident. Gray-skinned—yes; gray hair—yes; he met her glance and smiled. How sure he was of himself! He stood like a stone wall between her and comment—easy, cool, so very sure. There was no need for her to be anxious ever; she had only to let him do it all. He smiled at her again—not too much, as if forgiving; not too little, as if remembering. Was it all a mistake? A dream of hers—that porch at Skylight, the car that had come so fast? He did not know what had happened before he came. He had not asked; she had said nothing. He had ignored; he intended to ignore, to see that she ignored. Did men do things like that for selfishness? How strong a man must be not to show by sign, word, look if he had doubt. No matter his object—how strong he was! She tried to think what had made him seem weak to her—of telephone-slugs, the difference between twenty-five cents and twenty-four cents—it didn't seem to matter.

That night, still in her shining blue, she opened the door into the sitting-room that separated her room from his. She must ask him why he did not care. Was it that he could not feel keenly? Because he was older and emotions drained? Or had he been always so? But she would make him talk to her about it. She wanted to know why he did not care.

She opened his door noiselessly and stopped. His arms were flung across the table, his head upon them. His fingers were hanging lax—they quivered as she looked. There was a sound—a new on — Did men cry, then?

She stepped back silently and into her room. He cared. Queer!

BECAUSE the rain was freezing as it fell, there had been a fire lighted in Claribel's room. It had burned down until there was a thick, dull glow—no flash or flame—still, shining glow that was restful, that had achieved, had no effort to make, was loving, ended strife.

Claribel and Miss Sophie Strong had rocked for an hour before it. In that hour Claribel had told the story—not spared herself, not dwelt much on Tony's part nor on that of Dr. Holden. She had made no excuse.

"Miss Sophie, I don't know whether a girl outgrows selfishness or not. Do you know?" Miss Sophie shook her head. "Dear Miss Sophie, will I outgrow it? I seemed to be all mixed up. Everything got in my way. Chiefly silliness—but it was not just that after I saw Dalton and Tony. It was something else, then. I don't know what."

"Jealousy?"

"I don't think so."

"No. You were not in love with Dalton."

"No. I thought not."

"And you were in love with Dr. Holden."

"Yes. I thought so."

"What do you think now of Dr. Holden?"

"I don't know. I don't think of him at all—hardly."

"Nor of Dalton—what do you think of Dalton?"

Claribel leaned forward; her eyes shone.

"Miss Sophie, that he could never speak to me of what I have done, never show me that he remembers—it isn't as if we had talked it out—we never have. It's just as if it never happened. And he cared, too. I found that out. Isn't it the biggest thing a man could do? But I know without asking—it's the biggest thing a man ever did. That seems to be the only thing I am sure of."

"Have you told him so?"

"Oh, no! He would not like me to."

"I think he would like it very much, Clarie."

Claribel put her cheek against Miss Sophie's hand and they sat silently. The glow enveloped them, some little ticks of sleet against the glass the only sounds.

"I wonder where he is," Claribel said slowly.

"He is down-stairs. I heard him come in."

Dalton Strong, looking out into the rain, turned at the opening of the door. Claribel came swiftly across the room. She held up a hand against his speech.

"Don't! Don't say anything. Let me speak first. I might be afraid if you didn't. Let me."

She put her hand against his breast.

"Will you try and see if you can love me again?" The hail crashed smartly. "Because I love you, Dalton. I want your arm round me. I want to be held tight."

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The Golden Gates

Loyalty, and What It Sometimes Costs. Pathos, Very Near a Tear All the Time, but Not Overdone

By Ralph Durand

Illustration by James Reynolds

IVAN was a Tchuktchi. He had his home on the Siberian coast a few hundred miles from the mouth of the Lena River, where the sea is frozen for ten months in the year. In July, when the rivers were flowing, his tribe netted salmon, but for the greater part of the year the Tchuktchis lived on the sea-ice, miles away from the nearest land, and hunted the seal.

Ivan's daily life taught him three great virtues. He found that when he neglected to do something his father advised him to do, things went wrong. This taught him obedience. He found that if he made any sudden movement when he was stalking a basking seal, the seal escaped. This taught him patience. When his father had bad luck in hunting, he had to go for long periods with very little to eat. This taught him endurance.

Ivan was very ugly. His black hair was as straight and almost as coarse as that of a horse. His nose was so small and flat that if you had placed a harpoon-blade across his face from one fat cheek to another, the iron would not have touched it. His reindeer-skin clothes were so thick that his arms stuck out from his sides like a penguin's flippers. And he had a cross tattooed on his chin to show that he was a Christian.

Of religion Ivan knew almost nothing. His parents could never distinguish clearly in their minds between what little they had learned from a Russian missionary monk, whom they never saw more than once in a year, and the things that the shaman had told them—things that the monk wanted them to disbelieve. But they told Ivan that if he did not do his duty to his tribe he would go when he died to a place where it was very hot. This prospect had no terrors for him, because he could not realize what heat meant. The greatest heat he ever experienced was the comfortable stuffiness inside the snow-roofed hut when there was plenty of blubber in the oil-lamp. Heaven, on the other hand, had a great attraction for him. Every one said that there would be no night there. Every year where he lived there was one continuous night for four months on end, but he never got inured to the gloom and misery of it.

Before Ivan was born his parents used nearly every Christmas to go to church at Sagastyr. This involved a three weeks' journey over the coast-ice, and as they could not stop to hunt while they were traveling, they could only go if the autumn hunting had been good and there were large stocks of frozen fish and meat in the storehouse. After Ivan was christened his appetite grew so much faster than his ability to help find food, though he began to be useful as soon as he was old enough to set bird-snares and search for sea-fowls' eggs, that they had to stay at home. But when he was twelve years old the salmon-fishing was so good that an extra storehouse had to be built, and his father decided that they could all go to church for Christmas without running any risk of starving.

The journey to church was a wonderful experience for Ivan. Until then he had hardly realized that there were any other people in the world than the thirty or forty

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Tchuktchi who lived in the same camp as himself. Now he saw scores of other Tchuktchis and people of other races as well—Gilyaks in clothes made of salmon-skin; Tunguses driving reindeer-sleighs and wrapped in furs that an empress might have envied; Yakuts bringing to the Christmas market tusks of mammoths that they had dug out of the frozen swamps—all hurrying in the same direction.

THE church at Sagastyr was small in comparison with most churches, but even the painted cupola on its roof was larger than the snow hut that Ivan's family lived in. The decorations inside—the tinsel-framed icons and vividly colored pictures—were crude and tawdry, but Ivan thought them wonderful, and the glitter of scores of candles shining on the iconostasis—the great gilded gates that shut off the altar from the body of the church—almost dazzled him.

A monk in gorgeous vestments began to chant the litany of the Orthodox Church. Ivan could not understand the words but the constantly reiterated refrain: *"Gospodi, Gospodi, Gospodi, pomiluil"* sank deep into his memory. Russian church-music is worth going many miles to hear, and the monk had a voice which, had he chosen so to use it, would have drawn large crowds to hear it in Paris or London or New York. Ivan could not take his eyes off the priest till his mother told him that he must watch the gates of the iconostasis because they would presently open.

Until then Ivan had believed that God lived in a little icon that was carried wherever the family went, and hung on the wall of the skin tent they lived in during the summer salmon-fishing or over the sleeping-bench in the snow hut that they built for the ten months of winter, because he had been taught that whenever he came into the hut he must uncover his head and bow to it before he spoke or did anything else. The brilliance of the church dispelled this idea, and now the notion became firmly fixed in his mind that God lived behind the gilded gates and that when they opened he would see Him.

Suddenly the priest stopped chanting and disappeared. Ivan could not see where he went because the worshipers were all standing and he himself was so tightly squeezed between his mother and a burly Yakut that he could hardly move his head. A thrill of excitement stirred the congregation. They surged forward, jostling and pushing toward the iconostasis.

"Watch—watch!" said Ivan's mother.

Slowly the gates began to open. The worshipers pressed forward still more eagerly. Though he struggled hard to keep his place, Ivan was pushed back and back till he could see nothing but the broad backs of the men who had shoved him aside, and before he could wriggle a passage for himself through the fringe of the crowd, the gates had closed again.

Never for a day during the years that followed did Ivan lose sight of his determination that, when next he went to church, nothing should prevent his seeing God when the golden gates opened. But a succession of bad years made it impossible to make the long journey to Sagastyr again, and when he was seventeen came the worst winter he had ever known. The summer fishing was good, but all through September and October, while the sea was freezing over, terrific gales blew, smashing and grinding and pounding the ice so that, when at last it set solid, it was as rough and jagged for many miles out from the coast as the rocky crest of a mountain range. Very few holes were left in it at which seals could come up to breathe, and those holes were so surrounded with precipitous mounds of ice blocks that it was impossible to get near them.

The elders of the tribe debated what was best to be done. Should they at once put themselves on half-rations on the chance of the stock of frozen salmon lasting till the spring? Or should they hack a way northwards through the rough ice on the chance of finding smooth ice, perhaps even open water, beyond? All knew that the labor of making a sled-road across the jagged ice would be tremendous, and none knew how far seaward that terrible barrier extended. They decided to husband their stock of food to the utmost and stay where they were.

Ivan did not think that his family had enough salmon stored to last till the spring. One day, without saying anything to any one, he packed a week's food on a sled and started out to find smooth ice or die. He was determined that he would come back with seal meat on his sled or not come

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back at all, for with one less mouth to feed, his father and mother might just manage to live through the winter.

THAT same winter a whaling ship was caught in the ice between the Liakhov Islands and the mainland. This was bad luck for the whalers, but it exactly suited a passenger they had with them. MacGregor was a young man whose ambition it was to explore all the unexplored parts of the arctic regions, and he had made this voyage on the whaler in order to take any chance he could get of learning how to set about it. While the ship lay fast in the ice, he scoured the frozen seas all round, teaching himself to drive a dog-sled and to find his way about by taking observations of the stars. On one of his journeys he found Ivan lying, apparently dying, by the side of a broken sled. He took him to the ship and warmed and fed and nursed him back to life.

A month later a gale set the ice-pack moving, and the whaler was carried safely into open water. But it was impossible to put Ivan ashore, for thirty miles of ice lay between the ship and the nearest land, and the whalers knew that it might close in on them again if they did not make haste to escape when they could. An Eskimo interpreter on board who could speak a few words of the Tchuktchi langauge said that, so far as he could understand him, Ivan believed all his people to be dead. So MacGregor decided to adopt him, realizing that he would be very useful to him when he started arctic exploration in earnest.

The whaler reached Seattle in March. Knowing that town life would ruin Ivan's health, MacGregor took him to a Scotch farmer who lived among the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains, and left him while he himself went back to Harvard to get a good grounding in astronomy and all the other sciences necessary to his polar work. Ivan found the next two and a half years inexpressibly dreary. The farm work he was given to do would have seemed hard to a city-bred man, but was child's play to him. Yet it was never-ending, and he missed the long, blissful days of absolute idleness, passed in playing cat's-cradle with a string of sinew or lazily carving a piece of walrus ivory, such as he had enjoyed at home after a run of good luck at the hunting. He was fed regularly and often, but he was never given what he considered a satisfactorily square meal. At home, after perhaps being out on the ice for forty-eight hours on end, he would come in from hunting and drink a bowl of hot seal-blood soup, and then lie back on the sleeping-bench and gnaw at a lump of blubber as big as a football—a Tchuktchi can eat fourteen pounds of meat at a sitting—till he fell asleep with a half-eaten fragment still between his teeth. That was what he thought a real meal should be.

By the end of his first summer in America, Ivan understood a little English. After the ground froze there was little work to do about the farm, and MacPherson, the farmer —this was part of MacGregor's plan—began to teach him to read and write. Ivan did not in the least understand why a symbol that meant "See" and another that meant "Ee" and a third that meant "Tee" should, when placed together, mean something entirely different, or what logical connection there was between the three symbols: "C A T" and the lazy animal that slept all day, as Ivan would like to have done, in front of the kitchen fire. Still less did he understand of what use the art of reading and writing could be to himself or anybody else. In his former life every form of labor had been directly connected with the getting of food or warmth, and he saw no other object in work. But the habit of obedience was strong, and he set himself to master his spelling-book with the same dogged, stolid, patient energy that he had applied to the dragging of a heavily loaded sled.

Ivan's hope that some day he would be able to go again to the church at Sagastyr grew till it became a passionate longing. He wanted once again to see the gleam of scores of candles reflected from the gilded frames of the vividly colored icons, to hear the white-haired priest in purple-and-gold raiment chanting wonderful music, to watch with baited breath for the opening of the gates of the iconostasis. Music, and color still more than music, have an effect that is almost intoxicating on men whose lives are passed in silent wastes of snow and ice and have to endure every year four months of perpetual night. That hour at church had been the supreme hour of Ivan's life.

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It was long before he realized that the bare whitewashed building to which MacPherson took him on Sundays was also a church, and when he had realized it he came to the conclusion that MacGregor had brought him out of the realm of the color-loving god into that of a more austere deity. He found no meaning in the Shorter Catechism which MacPherson made him learn after church on Sunday afternoons, but he thought it quite reasonable that the god of such incomprehensible people as MacPherson and MacGregor should be less intelligible than the god whom the Russian monk had told the Tchuktchis to worship.

In the middle of his third August in America, MacPherson received a letter that intimately concerned Ivan from MacGregor.

I have now got a sufficiently good grounding in the dull theoretical side of arctic-exploration work, and I want to make a start right away on the practical part. Until a few years ago the great handicap to polar work was the difficulty of transporting food enough to last for long periods. Now that Stefansson has shown that it is possible to live on the country, hunting for one's food as one needs it, I intend to start work by learning all there is to know about hunting in the arctic. That's where Ivan comes in. He's got to teach me. At the same time, as every member of an arctic expedition ought to be able to take any other man's place, I shall begin to teach him to take simple scientific observations, such as reading the barometer and thermometer.

You say he can now read and write, so he ought not to find it very difficult. I will put him up to more intricate work later. If you will put him on to the train, I will meet him at Montreal. We shall go by sea to Fort Churchill on Hudson Bay, and from there overland to Chesterfield Inlet. This will be a sort of preliminary canter to get into the way of things. Ivan will teach me how to make myself comfortable at night when the thermometer is away the other side of zero, and I shall teach him how to steer by the compass. He ought to have no difficulty about that at first, as the magnetic north pole is due north of Fort Churchill. I have arranged for a couple of sleds, half a dozen dogs, provisions and all necessary equipment, including harpoons and so forth for seal-hunting, to be ready for us at Fort Churchill. We ought to reach Chesterfield Inlet about the middle of December, and we shall then turn aside to spend Christmas either at the Hudson Bay Company's post on Baker Lake or at the Canadian Police post at Fullerton. We shall lay in a fresh stock of provisions there, and then go due north again over the unexplored barren lands till we get to the magnetic pole itself. We shall stay there seal-hunting between Boothia Peninsula and King William Land till the ice breaks up, when a motor-boat belonging to the Hudson Bay Company that I have arranged for will pick us up and bring us back to_civilization. If everything has gone well, we shall then be able to make plans for a five years' tour. And I think everything must go well. I have thought over every detail and don't see where we can go wrong.

Ivan made no comment when he was told that he was to rejoin MacGregor. Since MacGregor had saved his life, he regarded himself as his property, to do with as he liked.

FOUR months later Ivan stood in the snow over the body of his dead master and wondered what he ought to do.

He had only a vague idea of how the accident had occurred. They were making ready for the day's march, Ivan harnessing the dogs and MacGregor securing the shot-gun that always rode on the top of the load in case they saw a hare or a ptarmigan. The explosion of the gun had made Ivan turn round, and he had seen MacGregor lying on the ground, blood soaking into the snow from a wound in the groin. MacGregor had lived for an hour after that, but had died without speaking a word that Ivan understood.

MacPherson had left it to MacGregor to explain his plans to Ivan, and MacGregor, finding him taciturn and difficult to talk to, had said nothing about them, supposing that he knew them already. Ivan, therefore, did not know that he was within a few days' journey of the place where MacGregor had intended to spend Christmas and lay in fresh supplies.

Fort Churchill was three weeks' journey to the southward. It would have been a perfectly simple matter for him to go back on the trail they had made, but to go back did not occur to him. MacGregor had told him that the needle in a little round glass-lidded box that they carried pointed always in the way they were to go, and had taught him to chose a mark that the needle pointed to, drive his dog-sled to it and then take a fresh bearing. This and the camp-work and the reading of the barometer and thermometer were his sole duties. He found no difficulty in it, and he was confident that he could do it without MacGregor just as well as with him. He had no idea why the needle pointed in the direction in which they were to go or why MacGregor wanted to go there, or for what purpose he was made to write in a little book the figure that the barometer-needle pointed to every

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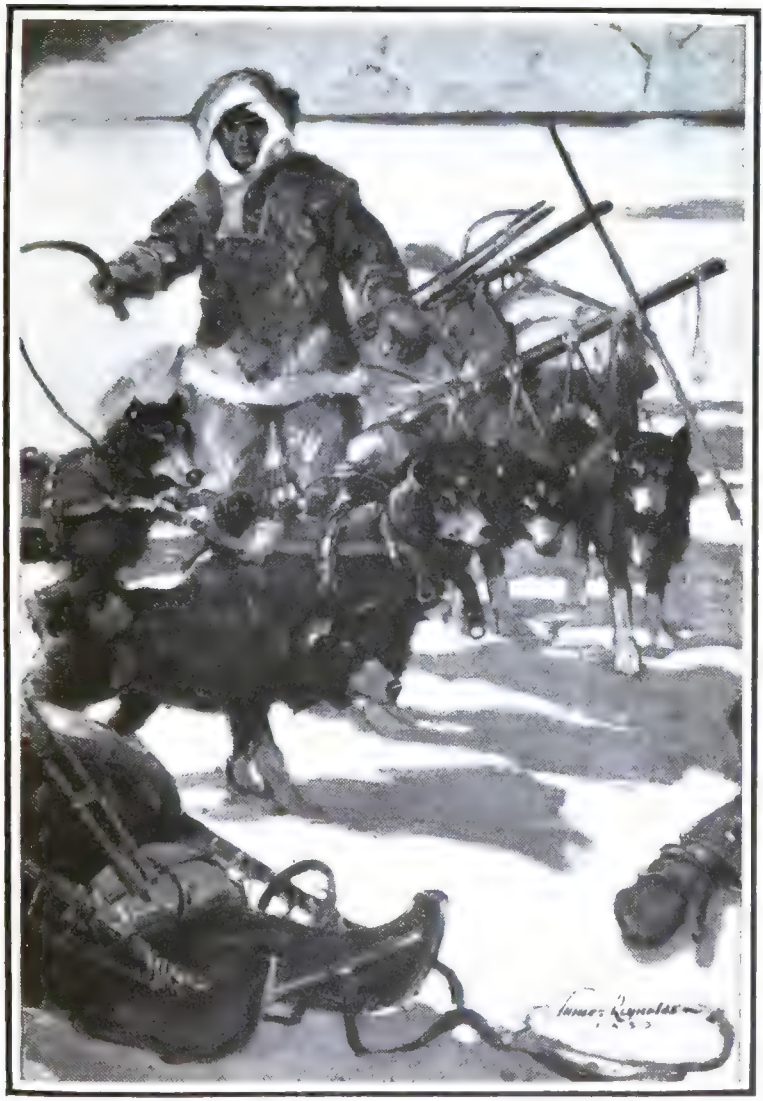

What was puzzling Ivan was that he felt instinctively that he could not leave MacGregor's body lying by the side of the trail.

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morning. The ways of men of MacGregor's tribe were past understanding. It was sufficient for him that MacGregor wished him to do it.

What was puzzling Ivan was that he felt instinctively that he could not leave MacGregor's body lying by the side of the trail as if it were a worn-out moccasin, and yet he did not know what should be done to speed his spirit to the heaven of which he knew so little. He could not remember that the Shorter Catechism had anything to say about it.

After prolonged thought he did what seemed best to do. He harnessed the best three dogs into MacGregor's sled and killed them there, so that their spirits could take his spirit to heaven. Then he divided the remainder of the food and, because he did not know how far it was to heaven, packed the larger share into MacGregor's sled. Finally he wrapped MacGregor's body in the best of the buffalo-robes and lashed it to the top of the load. This done, he repacked his own sled, took a compass-bearing, cracked his whip and marched. Ten minutes later, looking back, the sled and the body on it and the bodies of the dogs in the traces were one tiny black spot in the frozen white waste.

Very greatly did Ivan wish that MacGregor, before dying, had given him leave to accompany him to heaven. Since he had left his home, he had found life very dreary. The hope of ever finding his way back to Sagastyr and seeing the golden gates of the iconostasis open was getting very faint, and it was only that hope that had made life tolerable during the last three dreary years.

Ivan could have died without any overt act of suicide. All the polar people and some in other parts of the world—many South Sea Islanders, for example—have the power of lying down and dying at will. Ivan would certainly have used this power had not MacGregor given him definite work to do. He promised himself that as soon as he had done this work, as soon as he had reached the place that the compass would lead him to and had delivered to whomever he found there the diary containing the records of his readings of the barometer and thermometer that MacGregor had told him was so important, he would lie down and join his master. Through the long days of bitter toil that followed, the prospect of release from life when his duty was done cheered him as the prospect of fame cheers explorers who know why they explore.

FOUR days later Ivan crossed at right angles the trail between Fullerton and the Hudson Bay Company's trading-post. Though Ivan knew nothing of MacGregor's plans, he knew that if he followed this trail it would take him to some human habitation. He looked at the compass, half expecting that the needle would swing round and point along the trail; but the needle continued to point ahead, and Ivan followed it. He had an intuition that he was leaving all chance of human help behind him, so he put himself and his dogs on half-rations.

Ten days later the green glow of dawn turned to lemon-color, primrose, blush-pink, orange and then scarlet. For three minutes the sun's rim showed blood-red over the pink snow. Then the scarlet turned to orange-pink again and faded slowly away. Ivan knew that the sun would not rise again for four months, but the knowledge did not depress him as the last sight of the sun had depressed him in former years. He felt sure that before the long night was past he would be free to follow MacGregor to where there was never any night.

Three days further on the compass-needle led him onto sea-ice. The dogs whined to show that they smelled seal-holes, but Ivan did not stop to hunt, hungry though he was. He was eager to get on to wherever the needle was leading him, to tell whomever he met there that he had done his work, and then to die.

After two days on sea-ice he came to land again—rugged cliffs and steep hills. Going up-hill the sled slipped sideways on the icy slopes, and going down-hill it slid so fast that he had to cast the dogs loose lest it should dash into them and break their backs. In one place the ground was so rough that he unpacked the sled and went backward and forward, carrying the load on his back bit by bit, till he came to fairly level ground. When he went back for the last time to fetch the empty sled, he found that the half-famished dogs had gone off on the trail of a musk-ox. He searched for them for a whole day and then resigned himself to going on alone. Nowhere on the

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rough land surface could he drag more than half a load, so he had to go back at the end of every mile advanced to bring up the other half-load. After six days of this heart-breaking work he came again to sea-ice, where he was just able to drag the full load.

By using a harpoon as one uses a punt-pole, and thus making his arms help his legs, he was able, when the wind was light, to drag the sled as fast as a cart-horse drags a loaded dray. But three hours out of every four the wind was so strong that the sled became uncontrollable, and there was nothing to be done but anchor it to the ice and wait.

Ivan was becoming very weary. It seemed that the compass was getting tired as well. When he looked at it to take a bearing, the needle, instead of flickering, did not move unless he tapped the glass to rouse it, as MacGregor had taught him to rouse the needle of the barometer.

When men are nearly spent with toil and hunger, they hear strange voices and see strange things. Out of the corners of his eyes Ivan saw figures, black and indistinct in the dim starlight, moving in the same direction as himself. If he turned his head to see them more clearly, they disappeared, but he always saw them again when he put his weight on the trace once more.

A doctor could have told him that the figures were hallucinations caused by semi-starvation and exhaustion. But Ivan quite believed them to be real, and the sight of them gave him courage to persevere. It made him think that he must be getting near his journey's end. When he had gone with his parents to the church at Sagastyr, they had seen no one throughout the journey until the last day of it, and then they had seen many people moving in the same direction as themselves. Ivan now supposed that he and these dim figures that he saw were all bound for the same goal.

The voices that he thought he heard were more distinct. Sometimes it was the voice of men singing the salmon-fishers' song. This puzzled him, for the salmon-song is sung in July, when the sun goes round and round the horizon without sinking, not in the middle of the arctic night. Sometimes he heard MacGregor's voice shouting to his dog-team. This encouraged him. It made him think that one of the dim shapes he saw must be MacGregor's and that he would soon meet him again. But the most persistent sound, by some odd trick of memory, was the voice of the priest chanting: *"Gospodi, Gospodi, Gospodi, pomiluil"* This encouraged him still more. It led him to believe—his mind was weakening fast—that he must be coming to Sagastyr. If so, he would see the gates behind which God dwelt. He determined that this time he would watch them till they opened.

The sea-ice gave place to land again. At the sight of a steep cliff in front of him, Ivan's pluck nearly failed him, but he heard, or thought he heard, MacGregor's voice ring out across the wastes, and steeled himself to go on. Wearily he unpacked the load, fastened a part of it on to his back and staggered, clawing at exposed points of rock, to the top of the cliff. At the top of the cliff the ground was level, but by the time that he had carried the whole load and the sled there, he was so utterly spent that he could do no more till he had rested. He cooked a little food—very little, for there was very little left—ate it and slept.

NEXT day he took a bearing on a distant hill and went on. The snow surface was hard and level; what little wind there was was behind him, and he made better progress than he had made for a long time past. The lighter work gave him more leisure to think about the dim shapes that he saw and the voices that he heard. The shapes were not so dim now as they had been; they did not disappear quite so quickly when he looked straight at them, and the chanting in his ears: *"Gospodi, Gospodi, Gospodi, pomiluil"* was so loud that he knew no human voice could be chanting it.

Next day the compass did not move at all. Ivan rapped it and even shouted at it, but it would not waken. Fearing that it was frozen, he warmed it over the oil-lamp, but still it did not move.

Ivan was puzzled. Then slowly it dawned on him that the compass did not move because he had reached his goal.

Until now he had supposed that when he reached the journey's end he would find MacGregor's friends waiting for him and that he would be able to give them the diary with the barometer-readings that he had recorded in it, since it was to get these and similar readings that MacGregor came to the polar country. It gave Ivan intense

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satisfaction that, in spite of all his difficulties, he had reached the goal first. He saw no reason why he should wait for MacGregor's friends. They would easily find the diary when they came if they looked for it. He was free at last to die and to go to the place where there was no more night.

Joyfully he set about doing all that remained for him to do. He built a cairn of stones to show those who came after exactly where to look for him. For the last time he read the barometer and thermometer. His eyes were dim, and he could only read the large figures, but he did the best he could and wrote in his diary: "Bar. 30. Temp. —50." Then, lest those who found the diary should blame him for not waiting for them, he wrote in his clumsy, labored handwriting underneath the last entry,

I have done my work.

He carefully packed away diary and instruments, unrolled his caribou-fur sleeping-bag and lay down in it. The dim shapes were no longer moving but were standing still close to him. The chant: *"Gospodi, Gospodi, Gospodi, pomiluil"* was ringing in his ears like a trumpet-call. Suddenly, from horizon to zenith, the sky was filled with a glory of shimmering gold. Ivan had seen the aurora borealis more times than he could count, but this was no ordinary aurora. Usually it was a mere colorless light. Sometimes, more rarely, it was green, pink or mauve. Once he had seen it crimson, but never had he seen it golden.

It was like the golden gates of the iconostasis, but infinitely larger, grander, and more brilliant. Then, in a flash of inspiration, much that had puzzled him became clear. The church at Sagastyr was only the temporary home of God, the house that He had used once a year when He showed Himself to the Tchuktchis. This living splendor was the framework and gates of His real home. Ivan laid his head back on his pillow and smiled happily. He knew that very soon the gates would open.

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Strong, Important—a Drama of Living, Human People

The *Public Square*

Pidge Takes On a New Responsibility, and Dicky Cobden Receives a Message That Calls Him Back to India. They Go Their Ways, Both Seeking the Story of the Age

By Will Levington Comfort

Illustrations by C. R. Chickering

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

IN 1913, Pidge Musser arrived in New York from Los Angeles, and found lodging in Greenwich Village in the house of Miss Claes, a half-caste who usually passed for an Englishwoman. Pidge had lived all her nineteen years up to this time with her father, Adolph Musser, a metaphysician of Los Angeles, very learned, who made much talk answer for few deeds. The girl was in violent reaction against her father's mode of life, and set to work in New York to make her own career out of deeds and not words. During her first three months she nearly starved to death while writing a novel.

Associated with Miss Claes was a Hindu named Nagar. Some writing of his about Gandhi, then in South Africa, greatly interested Richard Cobden, a wealthy young New Yorker and editor of a weekly magazine called the *Public Square*. Cobden came down to the Village to see Nagar and met Pidge Musser. Also, he fell under the spell of the culture of Miss Claes, who submitted to him Pidge's novel as a serial possibility for the *Public Square*, but did not tell him who the author was. Dicky took rooms in Harrow Street and saw much of Pidge. After weeks, he reported on the novel to Miss Claes in Pidge's presence, roasting it to a turn, calling it "shop-girl literature." Still, the secret of authorship was kept.

Daily he became more enamored of Pidge, who was now pasting labels in a can factory for a living. Finally, Dicky asked Pidge to marry him. Fagged by the dreary days in the factory, she was furiously tempted to accept, but in his arms she realized that she would be taking Dicky Cobden for what he had rather than for what he was. She broke away. Dicky arranged to go to South Africa as a correspondent of the *Public Square*, with a vague idea, also, of finding the man Gandhi whom Nagar had written about. Just before leaving, in spite of his hurt, he changed Pidge's life for the better by making possible a position for her in the editorial rooms of the *Public Square*.

While Dicky was away, Pidge met a struggling young author named Rufus Melton, who had a sensuous attraction over her that she had never felt from Cobden.

She did not miss that Melton was a liar and an egotist, but still answered to a suffocating pull. She loaned him fifty dollars to get to Cleveland, but found that

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he had tricked her and stayed on in New York.

COBDEN was called back from Africa by the outbreak of the war in 1914. Pidge and he tried to be friends, but Dicky loved her too much to make a success of that. Finally, Pidge demoralized him a second time by confessing that Melton had kissed her and that something in her heart was unfinished, even now, in relation to the cad. Dicky, hopeless, but incapable of forgetting, went to the Near East as a correspondent, and later to India, where he received Pidge's letter that she had married Rufe Melton.

In deadly coldness and revulsion he suffered for weeks in India, finally getting to Ahmadabad, where Nagar and Mahatma Gandhi were. A curious miracle happened during his first interview with the Hindu leader. Dicky's love for Pidge returned to him in Gandhi's presence, and such a sorrow for her plight in falling for a man like Rufe Melton that a surging pity took the place of the deadly cold hatred which had brought him low. Dicky would have stayed on in India, but Nagar and Gandhi made it clear that his duty now lay in France with the fortunes of his own countrymen.

Pidge, in New York, had brought to Miss Claes's house a girl named Fanny Gallup, who used to sit beside her at the pasting-bench in the can factory. By nature unmoral, Fanny was badly run down, abandoned by a husband, with two small children on her hands. Pidge helped in their support. Her life with Rufus Melton in Miss Claes's house had so disillusioned her that she withdrew herself from him, save in outward form only. One morning, while Pidge was at work in the *Public Square* office, Rufe answered Fanny Gallup's lure on the way up-stairs, and entered her room, from which he presently emerged, disgusted. In love with Rufe, Fanny taunted Pidge that night with her inability to keep her man and made clear in a most graceless fashion all that had occurred.

Pidge walked slowly up-stairs to her own rooms, where Rufe, guessing what had happened, nervously awaited her. He stood by the open window and, clearing his voice, suggested that they read something.

"No; I'm going to bed," said Pidge.

Early the next morning after her scene with Fanny Gallup, Pidge moved softly about the shadowy room as she dressed. She saw Rufe's new golf suit, and her lips twisted into a smile. Another toy—another bit of acting! That was all of the game he cared for—the clothes that went with it. She thought of the night on the corner when the newsboy had pointed out Rufe as a movie actor. She saw his desk by the window. It looked like a troubled face. Here she was, as usual, furiously busy with his faults—so occupied that *he* didn't have to bother at all.

And there he was, lying on his back, innocent as a child. His complexion was almost as fresh, his black hair brushed back. It was as if he had fallen asleep with a tear in his eyes, for a little penciling of salt was on the thin blue-veined skin under the eyelid. His breast was uncovered, and that spoiled the picture, spoiled the pathos, for Rufe, though the least athletic of men, was hairy and glad of it.

She hadn't slept. This was a show-down time. She had met such several times with her father, when the days became so black and evil that something had to happen. Deep under words and surface-thoughts lay the affair of Fanny's room. The dreary consciousness of that never left Pidge, but actual thinking of details was another affair. She couldn't give way to them, and keep the outer quiet she had determined upon. She had been too honest to hide from herself, even in the beginning, that Rufe habitually took life as it came. She never could forget his first appraisal of herself in the reception-room of the *Public Square*. So this hadn't come in the nature of shock; rather, it was a pitiless uncovering of ugliness that had been vaguely subconscious before.

She left without waking him, and when she returned in the evening, Rufe wasn't at home. He hadn't rung her at the office, but she found word with Miss Claes that he had gone down to Washington. She felt something was going to happen, but through the day she had gathered her strength together to decide that she wouldn't be the one to bring it about. Fundamentally, she felt no differently toward Rufe; her responsibility was the same, but the mental and emotional rift was steadily widening, so that it seemed

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inevitable that it must take effect presently in some material way.

Pidge was half tempted to seek Miss Claes this night. She even went so far as to learn that her friend was at home. It always happened so when she needed help; Miss Claes might be out any or all other times. A light was in the basement room, and no voices of callers, but Pidge crept back up-stairs without speaking. She had failed.

She had run away from her father, failing there, failing here. She must see this through alone a little longer.

The following afternoon Rufe called for her at the *Public Square*. His eyes held a glint of triumph.

"I'm going to France," he said, when they were in the street. "I've arranged to do some features for Redge Walters and some Sunday-newspaper syndicate work from there. I've been smothering in Harrow Street—had to get away," he added.

"Yes; I know, Rufe." After a time she said, "I think it's a good thing."

"That's the way to look at it, Pidge," he said in a relieved voice, and confided, "I need the experience, too, you know, because I've never been to Europe——"

It was out before she thought,

"But how did you get to the Tunisian sands?"

"I mean—I've never stayed long enough to look around. Of course I've passed through."

He grouched for the rest of the evening, but she felt worse about this than he did. She had thought she was through nailing him like that. It had done no good, merely an additional breaking-out of her abysmal temper.

On the night before he left, Rufe was at his best—the play-boy she loved so much, and, of course, she was pressed harder and harder into the realm of the arctic princess, which was by no means her natural habitat. At last he had her crying, which was something, because it hadn't happened often.

"Going to miss your Rufie?" he whispered. "Sorry he's going away?"

"Oh, it isn't that!"

"What is it, Pidge?" he demanded in the tone of the head of a household. "Get it off your mind—don't keep anything from me."

That started her to laughing.

"It's noth—nothing, Rufe. I'm all right now," she said brokenly. "I'm only hurt because I haven't done it better——"

"What?"

"Us."

"Forget it!" he said. "I never hold a grudge."

DICKY COBDEN hadn't had his clothes off for several days. He was in the "Oregon" Forest with Colonel Boulden, who was no sort of man to tie to for one who felt that a clean wash-rag was one of the necessities of life. Dicky was chafed. Some of the chafing was from his mount, but not all. He was chafed in and out and over, chafed from his boots and belt and helmet, but especially from his key-ring. This last had ground into him all day. He took it out now, as he waited for coffee. Meanwhile, he edged as near as possible—without murdering anybody—to the trench-stove Boulden's cook had got going.

There was the key to his mother's house in Fiftieth Street—a thick, brass, stubby affair that belonged to the door of a house where hardware was well understood. This key couldn't be thrown away. Though it was practically unthinkable, a man might sometime get home. It had been done. There was a key to Fifty-four Harrow Street. The woman who ran the place had told him to keep it with him, because it was a symbol of something which he had professed at the time to understand. Then there was a long, old-fashioned inside-door key, black and a little bent—the meanest of all to dig into a man's hip—this to the hall door of his rooms in the same Harrow Street house. Its duplicate was in the hands of a girl he used to know. She had said she would look in on the apartment while he was gone, but she was married now. No use keeping it any longer.

He took it off the ring, but put it back again.

Certain things were good, but hard to get. Brandy was good. Coffee was good, especially hot. Saddle-horse stew was good. Pork pie, pork and beans, pork sausage and pancakes were reasonable and of good report, but keys on key-rings that gored a man while he rode or slept, and stretched back into meanings of the Utterly

Everybody's Magazine, April, 1923

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Absurd that a man couldn't get straight in Paris, much less in the slaughter-house of the Western front—keys on key-rings were sheer perversities, especially when a man wasn't game to toss them into any one of these open trenches.

They were saying at home that his stuff was blurred and unconvincing. Even John Higgins had been singularly silent of late. Chris Heidt, the managing editor of his newspaper connection, had recently written,

> We miss that fine patriotic ring that we have come to expect, Cobden.

Blurred, all right, and chafed. One thing he was getting to understand a little, and to have an affection for. That was the American soldier—not the officer so much, but the ruffian in the ranks, *dogus bogus Americanus*—the fellow made of Irish, Scotch and Jew, of German, English, Russian and French; something of each in solution, something of all. In the first place, this Yank was the funniest thing ever turned loose on the planet. His officers were occasionally funny in a different way.

THE matters of great moment in his experience in France all happened in the fall of 1918. He went into Paris at the end of that shocking summer and found a letter from Nagar which reiterated that the curtain could not rise on the drama of India until Great Britain was through fighting in France and the land of the Euphrates. He took up his quarters at the Garonne, and several days after his arrival there was a knock at his room door and voices outside. It was Haddon and Ames, correspondents out of New York, and they wanted money. Haddon talked first.

"He's off his head and in a mess. He mentioned your name. He says he sniffed some gas out in the vineyards somewhere in April and can't get over it. Either that, or the family he's fouled up with is feeding him on ground glass."

"Who's this you're talking about?" Cobden asked, though he had heard the name.

"Melton—done some magazine stories," said Haddon.

"You say he mentioned my name?"

"His French father-in-law picked on me first," Ames put in. "Just happened. I'm at the Charente, where a lot of Americans are putting up. Father-in-law told me a long story of wrongs to his only child—a female child now married to Author Melton. Mentioned your name."

"He was gassed?" Dicky hazarded.

"He says he was," said Haddon. "It's an operation case all right. He'll have to be cut out of that French house."

"I don't know whether it's gas in my case or not," Dicky said. "I don't claim to be quite normal, but the fact is I am not rightly aboard this conversation."

"The idea is to get aboard with some American currency," said Ames. "American in trouble—fellows all willing to help a little. Up to somebody to get the fool out. Father-in-law picked on me——"

"Let me get this straight," Dicky heard himself saying, with peculiar distaste.

He knew and respected Ames very much —a man of fifty, always doing a good turn for men of the craft, and apparently hating himself for it. Ames had been one of the best Washington correspondents in the American-press group, a fact-getter extraordinary who had a semiinspired way now and then of putting down his stuff. Dicky had often heard John Higgins speak of Ames, who was weathered to a fuzzy gray like a fence-board. Just now, Ames bluffed out his embarrassment by speaking of one of Melton's stories.

"A short story in one of the weeklies —called 'Dr. Filter'—hell of a good story. It's nothing to me," Ames finished. "Only, the kid's an American, and he's tight up against one of Paris's prettiest ways."

"The Frenchman's name is Ducier," Haddon continued. "Melton's been living at his house—mixed with the daughter—forced to marry. Now Parent Ducier says the least he can do is to get a living for himself out of it—hard times. In fact, Mother and Father Ducier have taken Melton upon themselves as a life-work."

"How these young literary people carry on!" Ames remarked.

"You say he married her?" Dicky asked.

"Showed me the passport," said Ames. "I couldn't get a word alone with Melton. He can't leave his bed. One of the family always in the room."

Dicky was straining so hard to understand that his mind resisted easy comprehension. He felt something coming to him

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out of all this—something waited for. At the same time there was an imperative warning in him against tolerating for an instant such a thought.

"Of course, whatever you want from me——"

"What you can spare," Haddon said. "The parents ask twenty thousand francs, but they'll take half that, easy. Just now, the boy's too sick to escape."

"Count on me for at least half of whatever it costs," Dicky said.

Haddon's eyes widened. Ames looked hurt and embarrassed. Dicky turned to the latter.

"Of course I mean that, Mr. Ames. I'm grateful to you for coming to me."

"I've heard Cobden was rich, Ames," Haddon explained.

The gray one came closer and examined Dicky's face.

"I heard it too," he said. "You really mean this?"

"I would give you the amount now, but I understand that you aren't sure what it will be. I know Melton. I'm glad to help, of course."

"I've heard you were rich, too," Ames repeated slowly, "but I didn't believe it."

"Why not?"

"You're too good a newspaper man," said Ames. "I didn't think a man could have real money and be as good a newspaper man as you."

Dicky hardly heard the tribute. The two men were leaving. That was the important thing to him.

"I remember, come to think of it, hearing old John Higgins tell about your family, but it didn't occur to me until just now," Ames called from the hall.

Dicky was alone. An intermittent geyser was at work within him. Every few minutes a surge of hot hope boiled up in his breast. It threatened to deluge him. Out of all the years' work was netted at this time one bit of "working knowledge," as Nagar might have called it—that he must not be deluded by this hope. He tried to cork it up; failing in that, he stood as still as he could in the midst of the surges. Gradually he got the thing in hand, but it was bitter work—this refusing to take the first real breath of life he had known for years.

He found his room in twilight. The day had slipped off while he struggled alone. His forehead was clammy with the effort going on. Persistently in the depths of him grew an awareness that he had not done the full task called of him in merely offering Ames money. This point became so ugly and evident that he had to laugh. More and more, as moments sped on, it faced him squarely. He had no sentimentalism to tide him over; his emotions stayed ice-cold.

"But it's like a fool Sunday-school story!" he muttered. Then again the words broke from him. "But, living God, suppose she doesn't want the bundle back! Suppose she's been trying to lose it, and here I am running after her, saying, 'You've dropped something, *madame*——' "

But he couldn't budge.

Full dark was in the room when he rung Ames at the Charente:

"I've been thinking over this thing, Mr. Ames, and I'm asking a favor——"

"Yes," came coldly across the town. Ames believed he was trying to wriggle out of his promise to pay half.

"I've come to the conclusion that this thing is up to me—the whole business, and I'll thank you very much for Mr. Melton's present address."

"Number Sixteen, Rue de Belleville, Villancourt." The tones had warmed.

"Thanks. I'll report to you presently," Cobden said.

"Sure you don't want me—or one of us to go along with you?" Ames persisted.

"I'll see what I can do alone first, if you don't mind."

A QUEER drama from eight to twelve that night in the little house of Ducier! Four hours—as long as an uncut opera. The sick man moaned, and interrupted everything, calling to Dicky Cobden:

"For the love of God, don't go away and leave me here! I'm done for, if you leave me alone again. Oh, Cobden, Cobden——"

The daughter wept. It was her entire part. She had a brown mole upon her ruddy, rounded cheek, and very white small teeth in gums of a red that Dicky had never seen before except in dental advertisements. She was made of little curves, and all of them were required in the art of her weeping.

"What's the matter?" Dicky asked of

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her, during a halt in the proceedings. This was along about the beginning of the third act.

"You are taking him away!"

"I don't seem to be very successful about it."

"Oh, but you will—you are taking him away!"

Dicky was glad to hear that he was going to get what he came for, but the obstacles still looked serious.

"Isn't that what you want—to be rid and paid?"

"My father—yes—but me—no, no! He is my lover—oh, such an adored!"

The mother took the part of sharing equally the daughter's maiming of heart and her husband's outraged honor. Never before had such a thing befallen the house of Ducier. It was new to Cobden's experience just how obdurate an outraged European could be. Monsieur Ducier reiterated grimly that weeks ago in this house he had suddenly discovered a condition which destroyed all his past and future. He had forced marriage, but that did not suffice. Dicky turned to the bed at this point.

"How did you happen to stand for marriage, Melton?"

"Nothing to do with it—I was gassed."

Here the daughter's cries rose; the hands of the mother were uplifted to heaven, and the face of the father became more grim. It was against Dicky's training and heredity to stand for being bilked, yet he hesitated to call for help. To start the police at work would mean to give the story to the press and the American legation. Also, the matter of marriage—unthinkable! Momentarily Melton made it harder.

"If you go away and leave me after all they've said," he moaned, "there won't be any need for you to come back. I am telling you, Cobden, they keep me here—just as if my legs were tied."

Rufe spoke in English, which the mother and father did not understand, but the daughter had plenty to catch the drift. Dicky did not miss the fact that in the midst of her weeping there were subtle affairs to confide to her father. It cost him eighteen hundred dollars to get Melton clear that night, but, at least, Melton was thoroughly clear, the marriage certificate and receipt for heart-balm in full in his pocket. He watched curiously now to see if the tears of Daughter Ducier were dried, but no; though Melton spurned her last proffer of a kiss, at least with her, money was not all.

DICKY wasn't able to get any rest, in the days that followed, from a sense that he had done well. Rather to the contrary, he harbored a more or less constant feeling that, in mercy to Pidge Musser and all concerned, he would have been wiser to leave Rufe Melton where he was.

With every ounce of his returning strength Rufe yearned to get out of Paris. He had been abused; he was frightened to depths hitherto unplumbed. He lived in a mortal dread day and night that the Duciers would come for him again. Dicky was forced to believe that they had doped him a little, because his improvement was rapid.

"I can't get a passage for you at a moment's notice," Dicky would say. "Besides, you're not fit to travel for a few days yet. I don't want to send you back to New York looking like a hounded *apache*. Let me do this thing right, Rufe, while I'm in on it."

"But don't go away and leave me here!" Rufe moaned. "Let me go out with you when you go."

"You needn't have the slightest fear from the Duciers."

The hands came up and waved hopelessly.

"You don't know them! You don't know her!" Rufe moaned. "I want to get out of here! I want to get on the ship. I don't want to be left alone!"

And this was what he was getting ready to send back to Pidge! Once, when Dicky was really hard driven, a sudden chill of rage came over him, and he proceeded this far with a sentence:

"Why, Melton, I really ought to put you——"

The other words finished in his mind—"to death." He somehow managed to keep them from speech. He suffered especially from the feeling that he was playing the boob. To be sincerely in wrong was his pet aversion—dating from the night of the Punjabi dinner. Besides, he was tortured with the thought that Pidge Musser wouldn't thank him.

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Yet Rufe had called for him, had mentioned his name. One of the strangest things about it all to Dicky now was that the young man could accept all this—somehow as if he had it coming. Altogether mystifying. And after all, as Dicky looked back, boob or not, he couldn't see how he could have done otherwise.

RUFE seldom spoke of Pidge. Apparently getting back to New York meant Pidge; apparently they weren't separated. Rufe had the most extraordinary sense of taking her for granted. Once Dicky got an inkling that the other had refrained from writing to New York of his predicament for fear Pidge would come and find him ensconced in the house of Ducier. But, in the main, Dicky worked in the dark.

If Rufe had any money or any resources, he didn't let the fact be known. Dicky was permitted to purchase the passage for him to New York. Again the latter's capacity for astonishment was stretched, because Rufe seemed able to comfort himself with the fact that he had it all coming. Rufe had never been sick before. His present infirmity was entirely engrossing. "I was gassed," covered all discrepancies of word and deed.

A letter was written to Miss Claes, but it was not sent. Dicky could not be sure of what Rufe would say when he got back to New York—if, indeed, he would say anything. Miss Claes's advice was no good now, for the thing was done; so Dicky burned this letter on the day that he packed Rufe aboard train for the steamer. So far as he was concerned, not a word of the whole incident went to Harrow Street or to any place else.

Back in his room, he found himself nervous, tired and irritable. The place was queer and still. A servant came and took out the extra bed Rufe had occupied. It was stiller than ever after that—no moanings, no fears, no complaints. The change wasn't all relief, as Dicky had fancied it would be. He missed something—the world was so crazy, anyway—something that had taken him out of himself for two weeks—at least that had played upon a different set of faculties. Oh, yes; it was like getting used to a child—that was it.

It was just a whim. Dicky laughed over it himself, but presently dawned a queer bit of understanding that Pidge would be glad after all. If you play orderly and guardian and benefactor to a child, of course you miss the wretch. And Pidge was a woman, and she had said— What had she said—about there not being two ways? Now Dicky felt better. There had not been two ways for him. The chapter was ended at any rate.

Another event of this fall of 1918, so far as Dicky Cobden was concerned, was the armistice. You can tell how inactive hope had become within him at this time, and within the breasts of tens of thousands of others, when he hadn't believed that any other than a state of war was possible.

And finally, in December, six weeks after the armistice, at the time of the greatest rush in history for transatlantic steamers, when Dicky had about concluded that the quickest way home to New York would be round by Asia, a sepoy on leave crossed the city of Paris from the cantonments in Lourdenvoie and asked to see the American at the Garonne.

"You are Richard Cobden?" the young Hindu said, when the room door was closed.

Dicky nodded, a certain gladness in him that he did not understand. At the same time he was intent in a scrutiny of the caller's face—a youth, but very worn. Something about the eyes made the American think of a camel.

"Are you expecting a message from an American in Ahmadabad?"

"No."

"From any one there?"

"Yes." Now Dicky knew that it was the patience in the young Hindu's eyes that made him think of a camel.

"Is the name Juna?"

"Nagarjuna."

The soldier bowed.

"It is well. I was told to be assured before giving you the message. It is this: *That the curtain has risen, the play begun, and that a seat is reserved for you.*"

"Is there need of haste?"

"*No haste, but no delay.*"

"My plan is to go to New York——"

"That need not be changed, since it was added for me to say that it will be well for you to travel westward rather than to the east."

Everybody's Magazine, April, 1923

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"To Ahmadabad at once?"

"You will do well to go first to Bombay."

"Thank you. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Only say to Nagarjuna that I, too, hope to come for the end of that play."

"Your name?"

"He knows his messenger. Here I am not a name, hardly a number."

"A cigarette—a drink?"

"I will not tarry, since it is far to the cantonments."

The sepoy bowed and departed.

PIDGE MUSSER had moved round in an indescribable "deadness" for several days following Rufe's departure before it landed on her, theme and all, that she could do a book. All this time the manuscript had lain in the drawer, under the glass that waved. One Sunday morning, when Miss Claes was alone, she took the old story down to the kitchen range, and there was a hot fire for a while.

The new writing was not so simple and flowing. In the first place, there were only Sundays and an hour or two in the evening; but more than that was the fact that she had learned so well what stories, long and short, are not. She was now in the toil of technic, which is a long passage. First, the freedom of ignorance—"A man's a fool before he learns technic," John Higgins had said. "He's a cripple while he's learning it. When's he's learned it, and forgotten he's learned it, he begins to be a workman. That's the freedom of knowledge."

The old editor didn't know he had said it all in a sentence or two for Pidge Musser that day as he looked up from Rufe Melton's story. She wouldn't forget. Edit and rewrite—some evenings with nothing but a torturing inhibition to go to bed with. Edit, rewrite, copying—no finality about the sentences or about the myriad of small decisions of which a book is made—and so the slow, grisly year of 'Seventeen rounded out, war in and war out. Still, there was an invisible graciousness from the weaving of the plan in that she could get tired each day, that her faculties were so steadily involved in a task that they could not organize to curse God utterly or fall to slaying each other.

The *Public Square* was staying alive under the energy amassed by Dicky's family of trowel-makers, but John Higgins wasn't standing the punishment of the days. Pidge knew better than any one else how the old man was swiftly breaking. He fell into the fear of small things. Among other institutions he hated was the Department of Justice, but this department was hot after him, and he was bluffed at last. The climax had come upon the arrest of a famous pacifist, when John Higgins was cornered with the necessity of silence. Since there was no outlet in protest, his venom turned in on himself. His periods of illness were frequent, and Pidge had a great deal to do. Many of the editorial paragraphs were all or partly hers. His old reaction against her marriage was apparently forgotten, though his temper was unreliable. He was using her now as never before. Once in a while he would look at her long and queerly, and often he said, "I wish Dicky were here."

In April, about the same time, a book and a boy were born at Fifty-four Harrow Street. Pidge was present at both deliveries. The enactment of the boy's coming required a full night, and during the next day her activities at the *Public Square* were remote to Pidge, who had shrunk so deeply into herself, from nausea and a new kind of fright, that the meaning of outer events was distorted and ungripable. John Higgins didn't miss the fact. In the drag of the afternoon she was called to the telephone—Miss Claes on the wire.

"You'd better come, Pidge."

An hour later, between five and six in the afternoon, she was looking down into Fanny's face, which squirmed from side to side. The eyes moved round the room and finally fixed on Pidge.

"That you, Redhead?"

"Yes."

"You was a hell of a long time comin'."

"I know."

"That dirty animal hurt me—" Evidently this referred to the doctor.

"I'm sorry. He didn't mean to."

"Know all about it, don't yeh? Know all about everythin', don't yeh?"

Pidge didn't answer. Fanny lay a moment in pallid anger. Then her eyes slowly opened wider, stretched, filled with astonishment, part rapture, part fear.

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This key couldn't be thrown away. Though it was practically unthinkable, a man might sometime get home.

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"Why, Musser," Fanny said in an awed tone, as one listening to a far sound; "holy God, I'm dyin'!"

She was the last one in the room to know it—except the baby.

A queer little dud with his black hair that stayed combed. No telling what he knew any of the time. He didn't open his eyes so that anybody could catch him at it for several days, but the nurse never would have done raving over his black lashes. Finally Pidge heard the news—that the eyes weren't black after all, as the hair and lashes would indicate, but a dense blue.

"He's going to be a soldier—such a soldier!" the nurse exclaimed. "I know I'll die when I have to leave him."

Pidge's lips worked without sound, and then a funny little twisted smile stayed there—that made Miss Claes love her as never before.

RUFE MELTON came home to find life not the same. Matters had evolved while he was away about his country's business, matters that didn't please him now. He had rushed to Pidge. As the steamer approached New York, a novel and unforeseen eagerness woke within to get to her, but she hadn't put off her arctics. Besides, off duty from her editorial job, there was an infant in her arms for the most part—an eight-months-old male with combed hair that had looked into his face and begun to yell. Rufe took this as an affront. He had supposed it hers at first.

"Sometimes I forget that it isn't," Pidge had said.

Harrow Street furnished the statement and proof, however, that it was Fanny Gallup's, who was dead.

"But why don't you adopt the other two?" he asked.

"Miss Claes has found homes for Albert's children," Pidge said.

Rufe stood it for two days.

"This can't go on, Pidge. I've got to get to work—no nerves to work in this racket since I was gassed——"

"Of course not! I quite catch your point." Under his surface-anger she saw the old look of hurt wonder that harrowed her so. "Come back—any time, Rufe—come whenever you can. Always a place here, you know," she called.

When Dicky Cobden reached New York, he found that Pidge had been called to Los Angeles because her father was ill. It was mid-January, and he went at once to his mother's house in Fiftieth Street. The strain of waiting for his home-coming there had been almost too much. Grandfather had flickered out; his bed and chairs gaped and would not be comforted. Dicky went to the living arms, however, and found rest and gave it. His mother and aunt and sister livened up like plants newly watered.

Outwardly, things looked as hopeless as possible at the *Public Square*. From his latest retirement to his rooms for a change of luck, John Higgins had been taken to the hospital instead of returning to his desk. It was a gray-faced old man that Dicky found in the early morning in a room that smelled of drugs—a face that didn't look at him squarely. The light hurt John Higgins' eyes and made the features writhe. Dicky wanted to move round to the other side of the bed, so the face would be shaded, but his old friend held to him with both hands.

"We have been looking for you a long time, Dicky," he kept saying.

It wasn't the unshaven white stubble that changed the face so much as the quiver of the upper lip when John Higgins spoke.

"You'll be back at the desk in a day or two." The gray head shook in gloomy negative. "What's the matter, John?"

"Indigestion—all kinds of indigestion. Damn 'em, Dicky, the Department of Justice has made me eat my own words——"

"I rather liked yesterday's issue," he said, avoiding the *bête noire*. "Also, they tell me that the next two numbers are practically made up."

"You've been to the office, then?"

"No. I called up from home at breakfast. That's how I heard you were here. Just off the ship last night."

"Bert Ames got in three weeks ago. You were a long time coming."

"Matter of luck, John. My turn didn't come—everybody dying to get home since the racket stopped."

"Your paper's alive, Dicky—that's the best that can be said."

"My paper——"

"I'm looking for you to buy the rest. My

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equity is on the market. The *Public Square* is alive, but it's not my fault."

"Whose?"

"Didn't they tell you that the 'weekly' was away?" Dicky looked bewildered. A glint of the old humor had come back to John Higgins' eyes. "'The woman thou gavest me.'"

"You mean about Pidge Musser being called to Los Angeles?"

"Suddenly discovered she had a father who couldn't be denied. Ripped out of here on the fifth and left a hole in every department. They say I'm done with the desk for a time. I knew it without them telling me. I'd have had to wire her to come back, to-day or to-morrow—if you hadn't turned up."

Dicky was thankful for that. His thoughts now became busy adjusting to the fact that John Higgins wasn't returning to the desk at once.

"I know when I'm done," the old man repeated. "It's taken nearly sixty years, but I know. You've heard about the serpent that stings himself to death in captivity?"

"It's just the chafing of the muzzle, John. You're not stinging yourself to death."

"We all have our little code, Dicky, and I haven't been true to mine. Your paper's alive, and my part of it's for sale. It isn't my fault that it's alive. My code pulled me the other way—against you—but that little thing stood by your interests. There's an enterprise to build on left, and you're back with your building-clothes on, but you've got her to thank, not me."

"Tell me——"

"I'd have been interned two years ago and the paper shut up. They were doing things in this country that I knew about"—the old man shut his eyes as if in nausea—"but she kept me still. One Sunday morning I wrote my little say about it all, and as I wrote I heard them singing 'Nearer my God to Thee' in a church down the block from my rooms. That's what I called the article. I was sober. I wrote for all days, and every year I had lived went into it—all I was. I was willing to throw you—a little matter of money which you could afford. I was throwing myself, but I was pleased enough with the story to show it to her Monday morning instead of sending it down to the composing-room."

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The narrative halted for several seconds. Dicky moved round the bed to rest the old man's eyes.

"That little tumult had me bluffed from the beginning. She barred the way to the printer; that's all. I thought she was done for when she married Melton, but she came back stronger than ever. Barred the way, Dicky—put her arms across the door. 'You can't do it, John Higgins; you can't send that down. It's just wanton destruction. This isn't your property to waste. My heart's in it, and Dicky's money's in it.' Well, she had her way—and the thing turned in on me—my own words. My organs of assimilation weren't strong enough to get away with it—and here I am."

Dicky gripped John Higgins' shoulder.

"We've still got a paper," he said at a hazard. "The war's over on the outside, at least."

"I mean what I said," the other added impressively. "I've studied how I could tell you. It doesn't seem quite so hard this morning at the show-down—but she's written all the decent stuff that's supposed to come from the desk. She's done the work. I mean what I said."

"But you can take a leave and keep your income——"

"No. That would be a drain. That's morals possibly, but not business. I want to sell, Dicky, and what I ask won't break you. I thought for a while I was done for, and I made out my holdings to her. That would be simple—but the old hulk still floats—so I have to have the money."

NOW Dicky dwelt reverently upon the old man's secret. Only one thing could have prevented John Higgins from getting his masterpiece into print; also John Higgins had made out his single possession in the world to Pidge—when he thought he was done for. It really should go through this way, Dicky thought. Pidge would accept the gift this way. She couldn't help herself. But an outsider couldn't blurt out an idea like this. It was just as delicate an affair to John Higgins as to Pidge—more delicate, rather, since it involved his death. Cobden rose.

"I'll look it all over to-day and tell you to-morrow morning, John. Be sure it will be all right for you."

"Bert Ames can help you for a few days

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until she comes back. No better Washington man anywhere than Bert Ames, and he knows the desk-end, too— Wait! I've got to tell you before you go how he dropped in to see me when he came back from France. I asked him if he'd seen you. He rather allowed he had—and launched into the story of your saving young Melton from the clutches of the French family. Couldn't stop him in time. He hadn't the slightest notion that the woman at the desk yonder was Mrs. Melton." Dicky was pale. "It didn't knock her out. That's the queer part," John Higgins added. "Get Bert Ames. There's one man who isn't doing any damage to you as he loafs round New York.

"I'll be back to-morrow morning," Dicky said. "Where's Melton now—Los Angeles?"

"No. Here in New York. I've heard he's stopping at the Vici Club," said John Higgins.

DICKY was in the street, and it was still only ten in the morning. The first thing he did then was to telegraph Pidge of his arrival, that all was well, and for her not to hurry. He spent the day at the *Public Square* offices, studying the books, reading up in the files. He fancied that he found an aggressive sort of integrity that was familiar here and there through the systems. The publishing property had weathered the war; it was a building-base. Dicky found much that he liked, but fought enthusiasm—fought back a rush of possessive impulses—until he was tired.

At six, when he reached Harrow Street for the first time, he was not permited to use the key to the street door that he had carried so long, for Miss Claes met him at the basement entrance. He had heard her voice over the telephone in the morning, but had not remotely anticipated the stir of feeling that the sight of her awakened. No emotionless reporter about Mr. Cobden at this moment. He followed her to the open fire; the door was shut. They stood together in silence, and he had never seen her look so well.

"Why, Miss Claes, you are just the same!" he was saying. "I mean, all day I have been seeing the ravages of the war-years in the people at home, in John Higgins, in everybody. But you——"

"I am happy in your coming."

Firelight and a fragrant room, and the stillness of Harrow Street. Miss Claes was speaking of Nagar, of Pidge, of Pidge and Fanny's child, of Rufus Melton, of Fanny Gallup, of himself, as if they were all one, all blent in destiny. Pidge had taken the child to Los Angeles.

A ring at the street door. Dicky watched her face as she left the room, calm and joyous, purse in hand. She returned in a moment with a telegram for him.

> Welcome home. So glad to hear, so relieved. Needed here a little longer. PIDGE.

The door shut again. Miss Claes had heard of everything—even of his episode with Rufe Melton in Paris.

"I should have put Ames wise about that," he told her. "It was pretty hard to have Pidge hurt that way."

"She brought home the news exultingly," Miss Claes answered. "Hurt, of course—her old sorrow for Rufus Melton, but a compensating gladness for you. Do you not see? But you cannot quite—you would have to be a woman to see what it meant to us. Pidge learned that day that you were close enough in sympathy to share her work. That was light to her out of the depths."

His head was turned to her thoughtfully. Miss Claes brought his ice and coffee.

"Pidge accepts no revelations from the sacred writings," she added. "Only messages of action count with her. Your action in Paris made her life magic—that you had been brave enough to help her with her task. And how richly will she pay!"

"It was not hard to do, but hard to know that it was the thing to do."

"All that matters now is that it is done. One crosses a goal, or one does not. The rest is forgotten."

Finally he spoke of India.

"Of course I've arranged to go," he said. "Nagar promises the story of the age——"

"I meant to speak of that to-night," she said. "His message is here for you, in case you did not receive word from the sepoy in Paris: '*No haste, but no delay.*' "

He started. This of Harrow Street was like an office of all the world.

Dicky was riding westward through the citrus groves of the last fifty miles

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into Los Angeles. Eight days in New York; there had been no public announcement of a change in ownership of the *Public Square*, although John Higgins had retired and new energies were actively in operation. The old editor's faith was gone in himself, but anchored all the tighter to the son of the trowel-makers.

The great range was crossed. All the forenoon the air had been clear and cold, but at noon the limited had slipped down into San Bernardino, into summer and fruit fragrance. Now it was two in the afternoon, and Dicky looked out upon one little town after another, the like of which he had never seen before. They were sun-drenched and flowery, breathing-spaces between the houses and vine-clad trellises, and everywhere the great orchards, sometimes palm-bordered and often with rose-covered fences of stone.

"Sit tight; sit tight," he said to himself.

A hundred times he had repeated this today. There was loose in him a power of feeling which made the days of his straight, unemotional reporting look like a feeble affectation. Coming into the harbor of New York less than two weeks before, he had learned to accept the emptiness of life. But since then a new order of content had filled him. Was it necessary to be emptied of the old entirely in order to be filled with the new?

Pasadena was behind; the limited was running down-grade into Los Angeles; then momentary halts with Mexican faces turned to the car-windows—Chinese faces, a tangle of freights—finally a slow-down, and on one side groups of upturned faces, expectant, some strained to an intense kind of pain to catch the eyes of their own. The bags had to be put out. There were people in front of him; he was shut off from windows.

"Sit tight, Dicky——"

A WHITE, limp-brimmed straw hat pulled down over her ears like a bonnet. A taller Pidge—no; she was standing on her toes to look over the shoulders of the crowd. Now she saw him; her eyes blinked, her shoulders lifting quickly. He moved slowly, positively, not crushing anybody. Her hands were raised—one higher than the other, the fingers apart. They stayed so until he pressed against them. She *was* taller. Their faces were so close—both shaded for an instant under the wide brim of her hat. He had been looking into her eyes; then they were too close to look into. It seemed neither had anything to do about it. He hardly dared remember.

Some one near by knew a happiness that shrieked. They walked away from the many voices.

"How's your father?"

"I think he's better. You heard about the baby—Fanny Gallup's baby?"

"Yes."

"He's in Santa Monica; so I'll have to hurry back. You'll come?"

"Yes. Shall we get a motor-car?"

"No. The interurban. I'll show you."

In the city car to the interurban station, she said,

"Oh, Dicky, it's so good!" Then, after a pause, she added, "We don't need to talk about ourselves."

"Don't we?"

"It's days before your ship?"

"Yes."

"I can show you around. It's hard for me not to be troubled about the *Public Square*——"

"Everything's all right there. I'll tell you everything when we get on the other car. You'll like it all."

"And must you really go to India?"

"I arranged with Nagar before I left. It's the story of the age, he says. After that——"

"Yes?"

'After that—New York."

They were in the Santa Monica car, through Hollywood, on the way down to the ocean.

"So he won't be coming back, I'm afraid," Dicky told her about John Higgins. "He understands that his desk is there for him as long as he wants it, but he doesn't encourage any one to believe he'll use it again. I told him he could do Washington and leave Bert Ames on the desk for the present, but he only shook his head."

"I saw it coming," said Pidge. "Oh, I've seen it for a long time! There was never anything I could do to help him. I never can really help when I want to."

He felt she was thinking of Melton. She was, but she was thinking of Fanny Gallup, too, and John Higgins.

"We're going to work safely and slowly now to bring up the *Public Square*," he

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said. "If a story or article just suits, we mustn't let the price stand in the way any longer." She nodded wonderingly. "Bert Ames has two or three good ideas to work out at the desk before he leaves for Washington."

"But who after that?"

"*Sit tight, Dicky!*"

He coughed.

"It isn't like the desk in the old sense. We have talked about that. Pidge, I'm wabbling a bit, but the desk is yours."

They were sitting in the windy front seats. She appeared to be looking into the back of the motor-man's neck.

"When you get back," he added.

Her eyes did not move.

"There wouldn't have been any *Public Square* if you hadn't been there. I know all about the 'Nearer My God to Thee' story, and the editorial paragraphs and how you have kept the reviews, and somehow got stories without money and without price. John Higgins told me everything. It isn't giving you a reward. It is only going on as you were, with some money to work with, and two or three good men to help, and a salary for yourself that will make up in a small way for the pittance you've been living on for years."

"There mustn't be any desk, Dicky," she said queerly.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean we'd be the laughting-stock of New York if I perched on a desk, calling myself the 'editor.'"

She halted, thinking of what Miss Claes had advised about her authorship of "The Lance of the Rivernais."

"You'll take it, Pidge?" he said, with deadly calm.

"I'll do what I can until you come back. It must be managed very quietly. No announcements. I'll be there as I was. I've been thinking a lot. The *Public Square*—I know how dear it is to you, Dicky. It is to me, too. It will be wonderful to have some money to work with. Oh, Dicky, if I'd ever get self-conscious about feeling all the responsibilities of the *Public Square* resting upon my shoulders, I'd muddle the whole business in a day."

"They have rested on your shoulders, Pidge."

'Yes; but I didn't stop to think— In another minute you'll be able to see the ocean."

They were silent. Then she pointed over the motor-man's shoulder, and he saw a vast stretch of leveled azure, like sky ironed out smooth.

"And—you're—going—across!" she said suddenly—and then, "Dicky, when they told me what you'd done in Paris——"

"Let's not—Pidge."

"And when I remembered that Sunday afternoon when you took me to your house—and what a beast I was—oh, how that hurt! I've been so sorry and so grateful."

"I can see now how things at my home would look to you."

HE HAD seen Pidge with Fanny's baby in her arms. He held the baby himself while she got breakfast one morning, and their laughter had disturbed Mr. Adolph Musser, who felt that the world was no place for such laughter with his nerves in the condition they were.

"His back feels so funny," Dicky explained. "It's so straight it bends backward."

Pidge gave him a look and went on timing the eggs. Mr. Musser's egg had to lie three and a half minutes in water that had ceased to boil.

"And his hair stays combed," Dicky added.

He had held converse with Mr. Musser, which was an experience. Mrs. Rab Gaunt Hastings had gone her way after a series of such experiences, her fortune undivided. It had been thought that the undivided nature of her departure was in a measure responsible for Mr. Musser's nervous breakdown, though he explained it metaphysically. Since he could not be left in his weak state, it was arranged for him to return with Pidge to New York.

"I have known for many months that the field of my labors was to be amplified," said Mr. Musser, with one of his sudden hopeful flashes. "My illness is but a cleansing in preparation. Always the wrecker before the builder. My throat, for instance——"

Pidge called from the fig tree back of the bungalow. It was their last day. For seven days they had walked the sunny silent mesas, traced the interminable cañons,

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She was speaking, but still he didn't hear, for that moment, in the superb sunlight, he saw Pidge Musser as he had never seen her before.

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and miles and miles of curving shore of the sea. To-night, for him, the Valley train to San Francisco; to-morrow afternoon the Pacific Mail.

She had spoken of Rufus Melton for the first time.

"He was really married in France?" she asked.

"They frightened him into it," Dicky said. "It seemed to me as if Rufe looked upon it as a way out—and then found that they didn't mean to let him escape even then."

There was no suffocating emotion about this talk. They found much to laugh at in those seven flawless days.

"I started things going among the agents in New York for a serial," he said at the last, "but you'll have to decide. We want a corking long story, Pidge—one that has brain and brawn—" Her face was turned away. "Just the right one should be lying round somewhere," he added.

"I'll look," she said.

She would have gone into the city with him, but he said not.

"You would have to come back alone."

Their real parting was on the palisades, and there were few words about it.

"It's work now," he said. "We go opposite ways for the same job—the story of the age."

"And after that—New York," she answered.

They stood in the superb sunlight at the edge of the escarpment. Hundreds of feet below was an old abandoned bath-house, and the three white lines of surf pressing into the land, like tireless fingers of a modeler upon the clay. To the left was the portal of the cañon, to the right the fallow lands, with feathery brushes of eucalyptus against the sky.

"We're all meshed yet, Dicky—meshed in wantings and struggles, all tracked up with recent experiences. We can't see each other clearly yet."

He was looking into her face in half-profile. Quietly it had dawned upon him that he couldn't have spared a single one of the hard days of the past five years, not a single one of the black patches, even.

"We can't what?" he said strangely.

She was speaking, but still he didn't hear, for that moment, in the superb sunlight, he saw Pidge Musser as he had never seen her before.

DICKY reached Calcutta toward the end of March, 1919, and had no difficulty in learning that the Little Man would be in Bombay within a week. Where Gandhi was at any given time in the Indian empire these days was the most public of all facts. It was as if one entered a house and asked the children where their mother was. Both the native and English press were full of his sayings and doings, though he was seen and heard, of course, from different angles. The Rowlatt Bills had just been passed, and Dicky painstakingly looked into the nature of these as he crossed India to Bombay, hoping to find Nagar there. But Nagar was working in Lahore and Amritsar.

No question about India being a bit stunned over the passage of the Rowlatt Bills two weeks before. These measures provided that the ordinary criminal laws should be supplemented, and certain emergency powers added by the government to deal with anarchical and revolutionary movements. The shock to native India lay in the fact that she had been led to expect that the measures adopted during the war would be mitigated, rather than intensified, at this time. And Mahatma-ji was on the war-path of the "soul."

Gandhi reached Bombay on April third, a few hours later than he was expected, having missed connections at Secunderabad. He was followed by a great crowd from the railway station to the house of his host. Dicky, who had watched from a distance the emerging of the Indian idol from his third-class coach, wondered if he were ever again to get the Little Man alone in a room as in Ahmadabad. He had hardly reached the hotel when he received a message to accompany bearer to the house of Nihal Siddantha.

He was led through the crowd without difficulty, and to an inner room where Mahatma-ji sat alone, both hands extended. Dicky sat down on the empty cushion before him.

"It is good to see you again, Mr. Cobden. I regret that I was not in Bombay when you arrived; especially since it happened that Nagarjuna was needed in the North at this time, but we cannot think first of our own affairs. I am expected in Lahore on the tenth, but doubtless you will start for there

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or for Amritsar, which is very near Lahore, before that."

Gandhi was slightly changed. The wasted body was even lower on its cushions. The look of intense weariness was still apparent, but the look of fearlessness was enhanced. Dicky heard the humming of the *charka* in the next room as before. The fragrance returned to his nostrils. A feeling stole over him of eagerness to do something for the physical welfare of the man before him, something to make the mere enduring of life easier.

"Physicians tell me that I should be very quiet," Gandhi explained, with a smile. "It is true that I was unable to keep all my appointments to speak on the other side of India, but, in the main, I am very active. The human body may be made to do what is required of it—after a fashion. Yes; there are many changes. Our position is rapidly becoming one of direct opposition to government.

"I see you have been faithfully at work, Mr. Cobden," the Little Man said a moment later. "I would have you tell me of your days in the French fields—what you found there after India—whatever you care to speak in regard to that which has brought you forward in kindness and understanding and peace——"

"To have you find—" Dicky began.

"It is well for me to tell you that you are more of a man than you were, but that is sufficient," Gandhi added. "These are our affairs, not yours——"

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"We have a saying that one who is coming forward in attainment must not delay his progress by pausing to contemplate or analyze himself. One's attainment rightly is the joy and affair of every other being but that one."

So Dicky talked of his days in France—of the hideous, directionless campaign-days. Suddenly, as he himself talked, the American soldier in composite seemed unveiled before his own eyes—the game and grinning Yank, who held fast in faith to but one thing under smoke and sun, against shock and night itself—his sense of humor, the fun of the thing.

Dicky *saw* the Yank now. That was all there was to it. In the dark room of France that picture had developed, and the presence of Mohandas Gandhi brought it out to the light. It was his for all time, and his eyes closed with pain that his old friend John Higgins had missed it—the one thing that one needed to know, to keep one's faith in America, and to gamble even to life itself that the new order of nobleman should one day rise with laughter.

He walked the streets of Bombay again, far into the night. All the meanings of New York that he had caught as a New Yorker, in his own home and in the house of Miss Claes, as an exile in Asia and correspondent in France fused into a splendid synthesis at last. He saw ships coming from all Europe to New York harbor—coming in through the Narrows, bearing the emigrants of all Europe—passing under the Statue of Liberty—tiny seeds diffusing into the vast crucible of the States, running out from the meeting-point of Manhattan on all the red lines of railway, into all the green rivers, planting themselves in all parts for the emerging of the new race at last—the Laughing Men, the dense physical model of which he had seen in France.

"*NO HASTE, but no delay.*" Gandhi had used the very words, during Dicky's second call, in suggesting that it would be well for him to join Nagar in the North. The American telegraphed that he would reach Amritsar on the evening of the ninth, and made his way northward slowly, stopping over in Cawnpore, Lucknow and Delhi. It was in Cawnpore, toward midday, after a two hours' ramble in white dust and the killing, colorless heat, that Dicky halted in the shade of a little grove of mangos. He took off his helmet and mopped his brow with a piece of silk already damp. In the shade, at a slight distance, his left foot twisted into the ground, sat an ascetic, who kept on with his muttering, not turning the way of the American. The look of an iron statue suggested itself. There were ashes, and worse, in the holy man's hair and in one empty eye-socket. The hands were held out in space—twisted, seared hands, but so moveless that Dicky thought of the iron statue again. The wrists were thick and very strong. Cobden squinted his eyes back toward the pitiless Indian street, and then he perceived the Hindu's face turned to him. A single vivid eye held him, as by the scruff of the neck. The voice was deep and resonant, as from

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one who had learned to breathe—a rare art. The words in English were quietly spoken.

"It is written, my son, that you are to come to the end of your search within six days."

Dicky edged closer, and asked courteously,

"Do you really get it that way?"

"So it reads in the crystals. To one who truly reads, the tale is one—whether read in the crystals or the stars."

The holy man lifted from between his thighs a handful of stained and rusty stones.

"You will go to a wall," he added studiously. "You will enter through the gate of the wall——"

"What wall, Father?"

"Who knows? I see the wall. The end comes within six days, and there is tumult."

"The end of my life?"

"There seems no surety of that, but it is possible." The deep voice went on: "The crystals foretell, but the wisdom and daring of man forestall. Had you not come to this tree, there would be no hope. As it is, you may come again to-morrow at this time."

"I'm afraid not, Father. Whatever wall it is, I shall be one day nearer it to-morrow."

Few would have noted the faint film of pallor under Dicky Cobden's tan. As white men go, he knew something about the Indian holy men. The more he learned the more he respected certain rare types. There is a saying in India that the real mystic never begs. Dicky determined to learn the quality of the man before him, for he rose now to depart without offering a present in money.

"Perhaps, Father, from this meeting I shall be wiser to face the fate that awaits me at the wall."

"You should be wise enough to take one day from your journey."

"I cannot take what is not altogether my own." The American laughed. "I am saying good-by now."

He walked slowly out of the shade of the trees. With each step his blood chilled a little, in spite of noon heat. He thought of the *Public Square*, of Pidge Musser at the desk there, of Harrow Street. Death had to come sometime, but life wasn't boring him just now. The sunlight of the open stretch stung his eyes with great weariness. The deep voice called from behind,

"Stay, my pupil!"

Dicky halted and returned, looking down into the apparently guileless and desireless eye.

"Alms for the temple in Cawnpore," the lips intoned.

"By all means, Father," the other said, no visible change upon his face as he placed in the palm of the beggar several bits of silver from his purse. In the burning day again, he lifted a tired smile to the sun. No true mystic, perhaps; but what had this man seen in the crystals?

AGAIN contrasts were keen in Dicky Cobden's mind as Nagar took him by the hand at the railway station in Amritsar on the evening of the ninth of April, 1919. The need for many words seemed past; there was quiet gladness. Dicky took up his quarters in the Golden Temple Inn. Under the lights at the entrance, as he passed in with Nagar, groups of Mohammedans and Hindus stood together, with self-conscious but eager shows of mutual friendship, and the American rubbed his eyes.

If there was one thing in India that could be counted upon like government itself, it was the hatred of these two great divisions of the native life. He had heard in recent days much of the swift breaking-down of these barriers under the influence of Mahatma-ji, but he had seen no example of it working out like this under the lights of the inn.

"Gandhi's work?" he asked. Nagar nodded. "I still wonder that the English don't get him, Nagar."

"The government regards him as harmless because he speaks of soul-force. It deals with precedents, Mahatma-ji with ideals."

"You think the government will arrest him sooner or later?"

"Oh, yes."

"Wouldn't his arrest hurt or delay his work?"

"The danger would be violence. Night and day he has been preparing his entire people to stand quiet and hateless, no matter what happens to him. He tells them that in the event of his imprisonment, or even of his martyrdom, they would only wound his spirit by answering the shedding of blood with blood."

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"But what do the British think when they see the Hindu and Moslem kotowing to each other—as at the door below when we came in?"

"The deputy commissioner, the highest English civilian here, looked upon a similar spectacle to-day," Nagar said. "I did not hear him, but he is reported to have remarked, 'There's going to be a row here,' and drank much cold soda-water."

"What is your work here, Nagar?" Dicky asked.

"I have been working among the students at the colleges of Lahore, and now here, in Amritsar, working with the young men and women—what they sometimes call in America the 'New Social Order.'"

"Are you preaching Gandhi's sort of peace?"

"Yes," said Nagar simply.

They talked late. For fully an hour after Nagar left, Dicky sat by the open window. smoking to keep the insects away. Tobacco did not entirely quench the stale, tired smell of the town. Even after he put out the light, sleepless hours passed, so it was late in the forenoon when he woke, hearing cries in the street. He crossed to the window

"*Hindu Mussulmanki jai!*" a voice cried. This he took to mean a native impulse to promote Hindu and Moslem unity, or something of the sort. Also he heard the cry repeatedly: "*Mahatma Gandhiki jai!*" Also Gandhi's name associated with the names of "Kitchlew and Satyapal," native leaders in Amritsar, of whom Nagar had spoken the night before. Presently there was a knock at his door. A serious but friendly young Hindu in student's garb bowed, entered and walked to the center of the room, saying in careful English,

"From Nagarjuna I have come, to be at the service of Cobden Sahib for the day."

"Thank you. Is Nagar busy?"

The student bowed again and proceeded,

"My name is Lala Relu Ram, and I am glad to come and make you acquainted with the disposition of the city."

The shouts were raised again outside.

"What's in the air?" Dicky asked. This was too much for Lala Relu Ram. "I mean the shouts below. Is this another holiday?"

"My people are gravely disturbed. Our leaders, Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal have been arrested by the deputy commissioner sahib and taken away from the city. The people are gathering *en masse* to go to the bungalow of the deputy commissioner with a petition that will remonstrate very firmly."

"We had better be there, don't you think?" said Dicky, and added, "When the doings begin."

"Doings?"

"When the performance is pulled off."

"Ah, *tamashal*"

"I think so," said Dicky.

They heard the slamming of boarded shop windows in all the native streets. The word for holiday—"*hartal*"—had gone abroad, and the whole of India, Cobden had frequently observed, works with one ear cocked for this signal. The two pressed through gathering groups, all making their way in one direction. The city was utterly strange to the American, since it was dark when he had come the night before, but Lala Relu Ram explained easily and at length.

"We are coming to the railway-yards," he said. "To approach the civil lines we must cross over the tracks on the carriage-bridge—carrying our request."

"Very firmly," said Dicky.

THEY were now in the midst of a continually augmenting crowd. Cobden regarded the movement as an altogether healthy impulse on the part of the proletariat to seek redress and understanding from its city father. Voices were not raised. There were no imprecations. Words he had heard Gandhi speak returned to him: "The gentlest people on earth."

They had passed through a stretch of bazaars, and before them now was a carriage-bridge over the railway right of way. On the bridge they were packed tightly in the throng by the railings on either side. In a moment the crowd in front halted and surged back. Lala Relu Ram gripped his arm queerly. Now they heard voices far ahead—angry voices in English—commanding the people to disperse. It appeared that the van of the crowd had been confronted by a police and military picket.

"We are not to be allowed to pass over the bridge," Lala Relu Ram said despairingly. "We are ordered to turn back into the city and not carry our petition to the deputy commissioner."

There was pressing forward again; more shouting from ahead. The student now whispered:

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"Our people are refusing to be stopped. They claim the right to make their plea."

Dicky was sinking himself into the purpose of the populace. As ever from his training, he sought to clear his mind of preconception and self-interest—so that the events might write upon a clean surface. Just now a shot was heard; a bullet sang overhead—then a volley. It was not until that moment that he remembered the dusty, twisted ascetic in the grove at Cawnpore.

He found himself suddenly in the very quick of the Indian people—under the cuticle of India herself. India the timid, the terrible; India talking of "soul-force;" India running with its petition to the ranking British representative of Amritsar; India always ready to listen and to use terms, very far as yet from the end of talk; India explaining her griefs and her hurts to herself and to the English, seeing neither the humor of her plight on one side nor its grimness on the other; India led about on a string which she might have broken with the flick of an eyelid.

That was what she had always seemed most like to Dicky Cobden—*hathis*, the elephant, gentlest and strongest of creatures. For many generations she had been banged about by the shouts and blows of the white mahout. This Western driver had made her stand round according to his own ideas—the great female elephant, full of tremors and flutterings which the white mahout could never understand, of vast, strange delicacies and incomputable powers. Now she was leaving her white mahout to follow about a little black man with an invisible string.

"Mahatma Gandhiki jail Gandhi Maharajiki jai!"

Dicky heard the voice raised now in the lull that followed the first volley—a little black man with an invisible string called "soul-force."

ONE with the crowd, he felt its galvanic jerk of ugliness pass through himself. The murmur of protest that now rose from the open mouths was like something from himself—as if his mouth, too, were open with sound. A bearded native in soiled white garments turned suddenly and pressed him back. This man had felt a stone under his bare foot, and he was making room to reach down and procure it. Dicky saw his fingers stretch toward the muck. He understood. This was one of the primal impulses of the human body in a stress of fear and hate.

Far ahead, the English officers roared commands for the natives to go back. The voices of native leaders standing with the English also implored the people to disperse. But the people had their petition. They wanted talk. Also, there were dead and wounded on the earth before the eyes of the front ranks. The American was still back in the thick of the natives, packed between the rails of the bridge, when the second volley came.

Instead of being driven back by the second scatter of shots, the native crowd now crushed its way across the bridge. In the opening on the other side it halted. The throng from the native city now found itself in the civil lines, no longer jammed by the narrow rails of the bridge. It had not yet become insensate, its grief not yet turned to uncontrollable rage. The English civilians and soldiers had fallen back.

No one had seized the leadership of the crowd. This was the instant of all to Dicky Cobden—the great turning. The native gathering might still have been reasoned with as it stood leaderless, looking upon its tormentors and upon its own dead; but instead of reason came the third volley from the soldiers and police. That was the prod of the ankus that turned the elephant ***musth.***

The shuddering of revolt that the people felt passed through Richard Cobden as well—whipped up in his own breast. Then he was carried forward with the mob.

Just as the throng opened up in the area of the civil lines, Dicky turned to look for Lala Relu Ram. That was the instant he was whacked to the ground, a slug from the pistol of one of the troopers gouging his left shoulder. He rose to one knee, still turned back, a laugh on his lips, looking for the student.

And now a most extraordinary shock was meted out to the son of the trowel-makers. A running native with gray, patchy face, completely carried away by the mob-impulse, halted, stood above the kneeling white man, struck him in the face with both hands, emptying his mouth at the same time. Some of the natives immediately behind, without questioning but that

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Dicky was one of the English, now tramped over his body as they ran. Though fallen, he still preserved a waver of consciousness—face down, head covered in his arms. Finally he was caught by the arm and jerked to the side.

It was Lala Relu Ram who had pulled him out of the crowd and looked down into a face covered with blood and mud and a welt or two. The only white about that face now was the lips, which smiled and repeated a word which the Hindu student had never heard in all his linguistic studies of the East and West.

To the Indian boy it sounded like "Pid-gee—Pid-gee!"

Pidge and Dicky are both seeking the Story of the Age. What will they find? See the conclusion of "The *Public Square*" in May EVERYBODY'S—out April 14th.

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May *EVERYBODY'S*—out April 14th

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The Power *of the* Press

A Man Who Built Upon What He Believed to Be a Mighty Truth, Who Believed in the Press as the Old Greek Believed in His Gods

By Ceylon Hollingsworth

HE IS the editor—the "old man"—of a daily in a great city. The daily is as great as the city, but what daily in what city is information not essential to this story.

Twenty-five years ago, a tall, broad, spare fellow of twenty-four, he came out of the Rockies with a wife and twenty thousand dollars. The money was his half from the sale of some mining claims. He looked round, picked out a journalistic wreck, and then got a job upon it as cub reporter. A year later, to the protesting dismay of everybody but the vendors, he bought the wreck.

He bought it on faith in what he believed to be a mighty truth. And his faith in himself was as solid as a granite hill, because his confidence in that truth was absolute. Under these powers, then, his paper slowly rose into sight and grew and grew, bigger and higher, until it stood at last like a mountain in a plain all its own.

One Sunday, at his country house, he and his guests fell to discussing the spiritual enginery of success, and for the first time he unveiled his faith to the world. Every great and permanent success, he told them, is based, as they all knew, upon some man's faith in something and his consequent faith in himself. And the secret of success in each man's life is the story of how he got that faith. And then he told them his.

They sat lounging in wicker chairs on a long, wide veranda in the sunset shadow of a white-winged house. His silvered blond head was lying back, and his half-closed gray eyes were sparkling to themselves over the smoke trail of a steamer hull down on the horizon. That trail slanted across a purple range of cloud mountains like the trail of other days, and he followed it.

This is the story, but not in his words. To set them down were impossible. They would need the presence of his long, square-angled face and his power of mind and personality. No; the story here is as it was lived. His wife sat near him, her gaze far out there with him on the trail in the purple clouds.

The editor was *not* drunk. He didn't stagger. For that matter, he never did. His iron-gray eye was inflexibly steady and sternly dead to everything that savored of humor, levity or all but the very weightiest questions of existence. His broad, massive face was calmly red, and his large mouth, sweet and benign at its corners, was set in a line of eternal adamant.

The twenty-two-year-old staff sat on the slab bunk across the rear of the log shack and, while ostensibly concerned with rolling a cigarette, kept an eye on the editorial figure. In a rusty black sombrero, blue-denim shirt, patched corduroys and old laced boots, its six-foot bulk had just appeared in the open door. Against the afternoon glare on the gray trail and milky green

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of spruce saplings it stood momentously dark and motionless.

"Take your feet off that stock!" The editor's voice was deep, concentrated, cold—the sound of overburdened wrath frozen solid.

The staff stretched his face in sincerest astonishment. He bent his yellow head down between his knees and stared under the bunk. There was no stock there. He knew it; the editor knew it, and everybody in that mining-camp knew it. Ever since the last issue had left the press the editor had been trying to borrow from every one the few dollars necessary to go to Central and secure paper for the circulation of three hundred.

The staff wrinkled his face in a sharpened examination of the majestic visage. No; Whitman was not drunk. He had gone crazy.

"Take your feet off that stock, I tell you!" thundered the editor, still motionless.

"What stock?"

"Put your feet up on that bunk!"

The staff hesitated one brief moment and then, with a sniff of disgust, hoisted his feet and then, stretching out, lit the cigarette.

"That's better!" ejaculated the editor.

With a sigh he swung the door shut and stepped gravely to the small combination editorial and dressing-table that stood beside a window on his left. Above the table hung a small mirror. He removed his sombrero and gazed at his reflection with critical intentness. His brow was high and ponderous. His thick black hair, streaked with white and tousled in long, worried locks, fell about his eyes. He combed them straight back with his fingers, back and back again.

"My God!" he exclaimed fervently, almost exultantly. He leaned over until his countenance was but six inches from the glass. "They can't lick *that!*"

THE staff raised his head and shoulders in a quick look at the tableau and dropped back with a grunt of derision. The editor slowly detached his gaze from the sympathy of the mirror and seated himself in a Windsor chair, home-made of "quakin' aspen." He next piled his laced boots defiantly on the table and, lighting a cob pipe, folded his arms and stared through the window a thousand miles into the logs and mortar of Cosgrove's store, six feet away next door.

"The sheriff's down at Bud's now. I just had a couple of drinks with him."

The staff, in sudden distress, raised on his elbow. The editor was smoking and staring at the logs as if some one else had spoken.

"Is he going to take press and all?"

"The papers with him empower and order him to take all but our living-equipment—all that the mortgage covers. But——"

"Aw—rats on your 'buts!' The jig's up. It was up long ago." The staff sat up. His long legs again shoved his feet under the bunk. Testy dejection, listless resignation bowed him over, his elbows on his knees, his hands clasped over the back of his head.

"Take your feet off that stock!" ordered the editor. Wrath froze and glittered in his eyes again.

"Say!" cried the staff in a crabbed outburst. "What's eating you? Are you coming down with snakes?"

"No, you damn fool; I'm being true to myself. Did you ever know me to profess a faith and not live it? I believe in the power of the press as the old Greek believed in his gods. It's a divinity. When a man devoutly invokes it for the commonweal in the spirit of truth, liberty and justice and mercy to all, as I did when I started the Achepex *Concentrator*, all hell cannot down him. You've heard all this before. For the past week my faith has seen an unfailing supply of stock under that bunk. My mind has seen it there, held it there. It holds and sees it there yet, and since I believe it there, I will not be recreant to my faith and allow you to put your feet on it."

"Suffering cats!" Ridicule, amazement and admiration were mixed up in this ejaculation, and the same emotions were blended in the young fellow's gray eyes. "But what good's your stock when the press and outfit have got to go?"

"The press and outfit are not going, Alec. When the supply company sued me"—he paused and looked solemnly at the obsolete hand-power press that stood within reach beside the window on the other side of the cabin—"I gave *that* into the custody of the power I believe in. All

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the sheriffs and creditors and all hell to boot can't budge it an inch."

"And the sheriff down at Bud's—about four rods off! Your ole gods'll have to act quick."

The editor smoked in perfect peace and gazed into the Cosgrove logs. At last he spoke.

"They act like lightning, my boy. That's why they never act till the time comes."

"Say!" exclaimed the staff suddenly in an alarmed tone. "You're not crazy enough to try keeping the press with *that?*" He nodded his head toward the table, where lay the old forty-five.

The editor gave it an indifferent, sidelong glance. He shook his head and returned to his gazing.

"That fool thing, Alec, is not the power of the press."

Alec lapsed into a gloom that soon became unbearable. The editor looked as if he intended sitting there forever. At last Alec pawed his old Fedora from the blankets and went out and stood on the step. He jerked a nod to two old prospectors who were smoking under the wooden awning of Cosgrove's store. Cabins and shacks of logs and slabs irregularly lined both sides of the trail for a half-mile down and a quarter-mile up the deep, timbered cañon. In both directions no one was in sight. It was the dead time of the afternoon, everybody at their claims or lolling in bunks. He started down the trail.

IN FRONT of the low doorway to Bud's saloon he halted. Bud's was a log building, twenty feet by sixty. Its rear end stood on piles washed by the creek foaming ten feet below the trail. Laughter and talking came out to him. He stood with his hands in his brown corduroys and gazed down the cañon to the blue, sealike plains fifty miles away. He, too, was in the six-foot class, but loose-jointed, broad, slender. His face was likable, and so burned and tanned it was almost disguised. It was a face in the making, with many possibilities—a long face with low, prominent cheek-bones. A bitter sneer lifted the upper lip. His eyes squinted in salty wistfulness.

He hadn't had any idea of stopping at Bud's when he left the bunk. The sounds of hilarity had snagged his bitterness like a thorn. In there was the sheriff, making them laugh, laughing himself. It was that heartlessness of a successful world which spites the failure. He was desolate, sore at himself, contemptuous of hope. He slouched into the dark hole. A social game of cards was the source of merriment. The sheriff, Bud and two others were playing hearts. Three or four camp wastrels were standing, looking on. No one else was within.

Alec drifted against the log wall behind the card-table and rolled a cigarette and watched apathetically. The sheriff was under height, stocky, heavy of face and bald-headed. There was nothing stern in his wrinkling light eye. He was of the mild, unaggressive type that sells writing-tablets. This was his fifth term. His appearance lied about him. As a sheriff he was deadly.

At last the round was finished with a whoop, and all relaxed and stretched. Bud went to the bar and called all hands for a drink on him. Alec never drank.

"Hello, Alec!" called the sheriff. "Going to be out a job, eh? Better go down and strike the *Call* for one. How's Whit?"

"Crazy," answered Alec glumly.

"Didn't seem only skin-full a while ago."

"He's sitting up there using mind-power and seeing things." And Alec, with dreary animation, related what had occurred in the cabin home and plant of the Achepex *Concentrator*.

"Mind-power!" The sheriff raised his glass to the chorused rumble of "Happy days!" and emptied it. "Fisher'll load up the stuff when he goes down after freight in the morning. Whit was crazy, to begin with, or he'd never have started a paper in a young prospect camp. How much did he stick you for?"

"All I had—two hundred. But a lot of that went into the claims. He gave me a half-interest in his three groups on Montana Hill. The paper'd been all right if the camp had made good."

"The camp's making good," declared Bud autocratically from behind the bar. There was an ugly tensity in his growl.

"It's dead as hell—and you know it!" For the first time that day, Alec showed fire in his eye.

"See here, young feller; you can't talk that line in here. And don't open your

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clap with it outside, either, nearer than Central."

Bud was tall, of great physical strength and small of eye. His flat, big-nosed face was saturnine, with a half-moon of brown brush on his upper lip. He enforced his advice with a steady, unfrowning glower. Alec took the eying without a flicker of lid. There was a moment's silence.

"I tell you one thing," said Alec, with a trembling lift in his voice and a stiffening of his shoulders: "This is a free country and, by God, I'll speak the truth when I want to, wherever I am! The camp's dead as hell, and you know it."

While he was still speaking, several of the astounded men ejaculated at the boy to warn and hush him. Bud flayed him for a moment with a scowl, and then strode round the end of the bar and walked up to him.

"Git out of here!"

Alec's eyes flared and glistened with hot-headed anger. He whitened with fight.

"I'll get out of here," he swore, "when I get good and ready."

Without a hint of preliminary, with an upward flash of his left, Bud hit him on the cheek-bone. He dropped. Bud hooked him by the collar of the blue-denim shirt and dragged him with a rush to the dust of the wagon-trail and came back glaring and snorting with amazement at the young fellow's temerity and lunacy.

"Gad!" he exclaimed. "What does he think I am, anyway?"

The men, grave-faced, exclaimed with expressive echoes. The sheriff, however, said nothing. His face was as grave as any man's there, but he didn't look at Bud. Motionless, with his thumbs in his belt, he had watched the drag-out and not taken his eye from the figure coiled on its side. The figure moved. As Bud rejoined the group, the sheriff unhooked his thumbs and hastened, inscrutably resolute, out to the figure. He stooped and helped Alec to his feet.

"Are you hurt any?"

Alec, dazed of eye and groggy, licked his lips and fumbled out a red bandanna and began wiping and soaking up the blood from his battered cheek. He shook his head. His eye, with returning faculties, sought the dark doorway. The sheriff watched him like a doctor a patient reacting to some drastic hypodermic. Suddenly he stepped in front of Alec.

"No," he said firmly; "you're not going back in there!" Alec tried to push him aside, eyes on the door and lit with the death-maker. "Have you got a gun?" demanded the sheriff, slapping him deftly on both hips. The pockets were soft. Alec was without coat. "Come up to the cabin," ordered the sheriff soothingly, still restraining him.

"Let him come in if he wants some more," came the cold call of Bud.

"Shut up, you damned fool!" The sheriff's voice, full of railroad iron, shot over his shoulder into the dark door, while he threw his strength into holding Alec as he might have held a colt rearing at the cars. "I'll arrest you, my boy, if you don't stop!" he cried sternly. "Come up to the cabin."

Alec ceased his struggling. The dark door was silent. He looked away from it for the first time.

"I'm going down to Hackett's," he said. "I was bound there when I stopped in."

He whirled away and strode down the trail. The chalky blue dust shot from his heels and traveled with the wind up-gulch like gun-smoke. The sheriff hooked a thumb in his belt and watched him a few moments as if judging a horse, and then reentered the saloon.

THERE was not a building in Achepex over three years old. But the long log house, the stables and corral of Junius Hackett had stood for fifteen years on an acre of level bench where the cañon made a sharp angle. All these years Hackett had furnished timbers for the mines at Central and Black Hawk. Before that he had been a freighter down in the Southwest. He was scarred up where Apache arrows had used him for a pincushion. He always had several "hands" boarding with him. His wife spent her years cooking and darning.

But Jane, the daughter, was the one whom Alec was heading for—Jane, twenty, black-haired, brown-eyed, handsome in body and spirit—a mountain girl. She had had two years at the state university. She wore an amethyst ring that Alec had given her last fall, when hope was high that they could be married this June. And not June but July was here.

"Lord heavens!" she gasped, when he

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walked in upon her in the large room that was kitchen, dining- and living-quarters. "What's happened to your face?"

"Just had a scrap with Bud—the whelp! The jig's up. Whit can't get the paper, and they take the press away to-morrow. The sheriff's up there now. I'll have to go back East to the folks."

He sat down, or, rather, in his despair, fell into a chair, knocking his bones like a hound. Jane, shocked by his damaged cheek and his utter hopelessness, opened her mouth to speak, but, instead, buried her lips in his hair, kissing him and nursing his head.

"I can't stand *that*—I won't let you leave me!" She drew his face upward and frowned at the red, swollen abrasion. "How did he do that?" she demanded.

He told her—aided by her interruptions and indignant sympathy related all from the entrance of the editor to his parting with the sheriff.

"If he opens his mouth again I'll kill him! Soon as I get back I'll put Whit's gun on and be ready for him."

"You'll do nothing of the sort! And I'm going to walk back with you or you'll go in there and Lord knows what'll happen. I have to go after the stage comes for some mail pop expects, anyway. I wish he was here. Mother went down on the load with him this morning, and they'll not be back till late. He'll do anything for me—you know that. We'll be married, and you can live here with pop and write till your stuff starts to sell. He said again this morning he'd gladly loan you the money to clean up the paper's debts, but it would only be throwing good after bad and wasting time. A paper up here's a joke, he says."

THE afternoon grew until it was nearing stage-time and the arrival of the mail—each day's great event—four o'clock. Prospectors from the cabins and tents in the adjacent gulches were trudging down the trails into camp. Denizens of Achepex were hoofing it home from work on their claims. The town was filling with men. But Whitman still sat gazing steadily over his boots into the Cosgrove logs. He heard Alec open and close the door and come toward the bunk. But when he looked round he saw, instead, the sheriff with his thumbs in his belt.

"Whit, brace up and forget this fool paper." The sheriff laid a hand on the editor's shoulder and squeezed it warmly. "I believe you've got some darn good claims on Montana Hill. Concentrate on them. You've always said you and Alec were only up here to find a bonanza and make your million and the paper was only church and religion to you. I wouldn't loan you a nickel to keep it going, but I'll grub-stake you two fifty dollars as a go-off if you'll go to mining and nothing else. You know a paper up here is preposterous."

"Nick"—the editor's thoughts were swept away in some strong rapids, and it was several moments before he could get them back to land—"you're better than winter wheat. But you are wrong. It's a faith with me. The power of the press is never preposterous anywhere."

"Of course it's not! But the Denver papers represent the power of the press up here."

"They do not! They represent it in Denver. *I* represent it up here. Sit down."

The sheriff dragged the stool from the composing-case and perched himself upon it, the long tails of his black cutaway hanging over it like a pigeon's back, his tan boots hooked in a rung, his gray knees spreading out confidentially.

"Whit, have you seen Alec? No? He and Bud had a nasty mix-up a couple hours ago." The editor, fixedly questioning him by eye, scratched a match and sucked the flame into the tarry heel of his pipe. "And he got the worst of it—a dirty, uncalled-for belt—and I'm worried. He's a bad sort to hit. You want to watch him. That's the kind that's going to blow Bud's head clean off one of these days."

And then, while the old heel sizzled and bubbled, he told what had occurred. Whit made no comment as the tale advanced. He only asked a question here and there, that he might the more clearly pack the facts away in their order.

"Where you going?" demanded the sheriff.

Whitman, without an utterance, suddenly was standing, his black sombrero as evenly on his head as if placed there by a surveyor's level.

"Down to Bud's, as the power of the press, to assert and preserve the rights to free speech."

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"Nothing of the sort! You stay right here. I have had all the trouble I want to-day keeping the peace."

"Everything of the sort! And you'll go along to keep the law in its dignity before them. I go unarmed. I'm not going down there to pick a fight. It's the power of the press that's about to walk in on him. If I didn't heed this order to charge, I wouldn't last longer than a soap-bubble in hell."

IN FRONT of Bud's, passing the time of day, some on their way in, others on their way out, were twenty or more men, young and old, candle-spattered, muck-soiled, tanned like copper, whiskered, stubbled, shaven. Inside, the bar was hung and tables filled with others, each talk-talk-talking, his faith in the Sally K. of his Montezuma group, or some such nomenclature, each beggaring optimism with his hopes, and all stubbornly blind and drifting in air-castles with the rope ladders cut away.

Suddenly in came Whitman, with the sheriff immediately behind. Bud had seen to it that his rumpus with Alec was the news of the week in every ear and eye; but without this knowledge every one would have known on sight that the two were not there for any drink. The men on the outside had crowded about the door and were craning in tense expectation. The sheriff caught Bud's eye and, frowning toward the editor, shook his head in admonition. Whit had stopped in the middle of the floor, half-way down the bar, and fixed his serenely burning gaze on Bud. Bud was busy. He gave the editor a keen glance and finished setting out bottle and glasses before two customers.

"Whit," he said, still busy, "I guess we can make room along here for you somewhere. Squeeze in!"

The editor broadened his broad shoulders and, placing his arms akimbo, ignored Bud and ran his eye from face to face back and forth from one end of the bar to the other. When he saw that he had the attention of all, he spoke.

"Gentlemen," he said, "has this camp made good?"

Instantly every man became still. Every one had connected the question with Alec, and knew that a quarrel was at hand. They glanced at Bud. With his hands on the bar he stood leaning at rest and imperturbably regarding Whit.

"It'll *make* good!" cried some one, with resentful optimism.

"That's not the question," declared the editor. "I believe it can be made good if the men of this camp pull together and for all, instead of each fellow for himself alone. Is this camp, this July, one-half the booming camp we all last fall prophesied it would be?" He waited a long, lagging moment and no one answered. "Then the camp has *not* made good. Compared even to last fall, let alone our expectations for this summer, the camp is deader than hell!"

His grim eye challenged them one by one. Bud's expression had festered, as it were, but he had not moved.

No one spoke. All were waiting for Bud to take the lead.

"No answer!" boomed the editor triumphantly. "Why? Because to deny my assertion is to commit yourselves to a self-evident lie. And yet that man"—he jerked his head toward Bud—"comes round here and knocks down my young partner without warning because he makes a statement that not one of you dare deny. I have come here to assert and exercise the right of free speech. I declare to you that any camp with the possibilities of this in its hills and that isn't interested enough in its own salvation to stand back of the paper and ink that have been advertising it to the outside world is not only deader than hell—it has *gone* there!"

His final words were uttered with a hissing, spurning eloquence that stung like a hot needle.

"Come on, now, Whit," spoke up the sheriff jovially; "you've spoken your mind and defended free speech. Come on out."

"Out?" cried Whitman. "I should say not! I've just commenced."

"You've just ended, you mean," growled Bud, and he vaulted upon the bar and the next moment was confronting the editor. "I didn't knock that cub of yours down for speaking his mind. I knocked him down for refusing to leave here when I told him to. Your guff about free speech in here is on a par with the rest of the lies in your dirty little rag of a sheet. I've been a good friend of yours, but that's done with. Git out of here!"

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"Give 'm to midnight to git out the district!" cried some overwrought firebrand.

"That's it!" cried several; and with this the crowd trampled in and packed themselves closely about the editor and Bud.

"Here, gentlemen!" cried the sheriff. "None of that! I'll run this now. Stand back!" He pushed this way and that. "Come out, Whit!"

He took the editor's arm and pulled. The editor threw him off without taking eye from Bud's face.

"Do you think I don't know who has been my one and my worst enemy since the *Concentrator* started?" demanded Whit. "*You!* Like all your kidney, you hate the press. You sneered about it—blackguarded it—behind my back. I told the sheriff I didn't come down here to pick a fight. And I wouldn't dirty my fists with you. But——"

And then it was over with in a flash. He planted his right heel in Bud's belt and propelled him, gulping for breath, back into the crowd.

"But I'll wipe my feet on you," he concluded, as he lowered his foot.

He had barely brought his foot to the floor when Bud, snorting with fury, rushed him. To the amazement of all, Bud seemed to have forgotten that a kick can be repeated, and received a second, a nimble masterpiece, that doubled him up. A great laughing whoop went up at this. The editor stood his ground. Bud charged again. But the sheriff had jumped between them.

"Take Whitman out!" he roared.

Some in the crowd pushed the editor around and surged with him to the door and through it, driving the crowd there ahead of them.

IN THE middle of the trail they swarmed about him, and there he explained his side of the quarrel, talking now at this one, now at that, as they drew his fire. Whatever fun men had made of the idea of a paper in Achepex, they had admired his brain-ability and had liked him as a genial companion and entertainer. While the mildest was in more or less of a dudgeon over his denunciation of the camp, yet the most truculent respected his intrepidity and frankness, and all had been "tickled" by what might be termed the "wittiness" of his skilful kicks. And all this, with curiosity, their interest in a living story, gave him their ears.

The crowd about him rapidly increased. Cosgrove's had emptied along with every cabin. Every man entering camp had hastened hotfoot to the concourse in front of Bud's.

"Wait a minute!" cried Whit suddenly.

On the mountain-side of the trail every cabin door was three to six steps from the ground, most of them having a platform as a porch. He shoved through the crowd and mounted such a platform. He took off his hat, facing them. The crowd flocked in.

"Listen!" he shouted. "I am constructive. There are the veins in these mountains that will make the richest camp in the state if we will only all pull together and attract the capital necessary to development. That can be done. Organize a Board of Trade and I will turn over to it my printing outfit. Thirty dollars a week will buy paper and ink and the postage on fifteen hundred copies of the *Concentrator* sent broadcast to a list of investment companies and brokers throughout the East. We'll make the *Concentrator* a prospectus of the camp from week to week, and put into it the irresistible language of enthusiasm and faith. The Board of Trade can answer the inquiries received. All I ask for myself and staff will be our grubstake, which ten bucks will more than buy per week. Forty dollars a week and hundreds of men! Surely we can find twenty men in this district who will contribute two dollars a week. But you must take action at once—for to-morrow, as you know, the sheriff takes my outfit."

He smiled down at them invitingly. On their upturned faces was the puzzled expression of pleasure, hope, misgiving and the coming of cold second thought—a crowd's reception of a gilded and unheard-of proposal. Men looked at one another to see what the other fellow thought. By this time all in Bud's had come outside to see and hear what was going on. Whit saw Bud standing just outside the door, a detestable scowl at work. The sheriff was in advance some paces. Down the trail, apart from the outskirts of the press, stood Jane and Alec, breathless and blank. The

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editor raised his hand above his head in an Indian salute and smiled.

"Where will you and Alec make?" cried some one near him.

"Where do we make?" he shouted to all. "If this camp prospers, we will. We are working several groups that we believe are wonders on Montana Hill. Isn't that the basis upon which you all are here? Here you stand—friends of mine, I hope, all—carpenters, mechanics, artisans, laborers, up here with your little savings, or grub-staked by some other worker in Denver or elsewhere—plenty to eat, a little money each week for other things, but no wages other than hope. Every one is putting his all into these hills. Even Cosgrove's on grub-stake, every dollar he makes as store-keeper and postmaster going into the development of the camp."

"Where's the twenty men, then, with the two bones?" jeered some skeptic.

"That's easy to answer!" cried the editor, swelling upward. "Where are the men who spend two dollars a week"—he pointed straight-armed at Bud's—"in *that* place—that spend four, six—God knows how much each week in there?"

He waited for this to soak in. He placed his arms akimbo, dropped his head forward and gazed pointedly at Bud. Most of the crowd automatically turned their heads and followed his lead. They saw Bud still as an image. Bud saw no one but Whit.

"Yes; there must be a lot that could put up two a week. I happened to be in his place last Saturday night—three in the morning—when he counted his cash. Two hundred and twenty-seven good hard bones for the day's work, and over a hundred and fifty of it clear velvet."

He laid these statements down in slow, deep utterances, beating time to them with his fist.

"But," he shouted suddenly, throwing his fist high and brandishing it, "is *he* putting any of that velvet back into this camp? Do you know of any claims he's working? Not a sou marquee! Never! It all goes down into his everlasting jeans. And yet *he's* the rip-roaring champion of this camp who knocks men down if they say the camp's not making good. It *is* making good for him! But the day it don't, he'll knock nobody down. He'll pack up and vamose."

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"You're a —— —— liar!"

Every man whirled. They saw Bud trembling with rage, his eye glassily fixed on Whitman. The editor, his head cocked to one side, his shoulders very square, was smiling at the result of his shot. The crowd looked back at him and grinned.

"Money not only talks," he remarked in low, far-carrying sarcasm; "it can squeal. Hear it?"

The crowd rippled with laughter.

"Now, listen for the last time!" he cried suddenly, very stern. "It's plain to all that we can get forty men who will put up fifty *cents* a week. That's twenty of the forty raised. Where's the other twenty coming from? Listen! What do they do in Denver, Golden, Central, every town in the whole U. S.? They make the saloon pay its share in existence. They license it—heavily. Since that man there is cleaning up from one hundred to three hundred a week in this camp, let him be assessed the other twenty. 'The camp's making good,' he roars around—*he* should be the last man to object to a little toll."

A SHOT, some smoke floating up gulch from Bud, a swirl of men about it, a wave sweeping the heads of the rest of the crowd, the editor with a hand in his hair, his head and shoulders drooping, his knees bending—but before he could drop, men were about him, swearing and lowering him gently to the platform.

Those whom the recoil of the shock turned toward the saloon saw the sheriff backing Bud through the door. The sheriff had a Colt's in Bud's stomach.

"Don't a man come in here!" thundered the sheriff.

They knew their sheriff. No one entered. But the door and the two front windows were walled across with a shuffling, constantly changing audience. The other two-thirds of the concourse was packed in a still, reverent mass about the platform.

"Behind the bar!" growled the sheriff in undertone. Bud, bleached, his lips withered and apart, his arms hanging with the long-barreled Colt's still in his right hand, marched slowly backward, steered by the pressure of the sheriff's gun.

"What you up to?" muttered Bud.

"Giving you a chance for your life. Go on!"

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Down the alley behind the bar paced the procession.

"Halt!" growled the sheriff. They had reached the cash-register. "I don't know whether you killed Whit. But if he's dead, that press is going to be his monument. It's going to stay where it is till the cabin rots. The judgment and costs are seventy-one dollars. Take it out that register and pay me!"

The muzzle of the gun screwed a dent into Bud's corduroys just below the belt-buckle. The pale eyes that had seemed so clement and unoffensive during the card game were as hard and bleak and frosty as ice-fields under an arctic moon and as insensate as the yawning hammer of his revolver.

"Is this a hold-up?" sneered Bud, with bony lips. "God! You darsn't shoot?"

"Can't you see you've still got your gun on, you damn fool? There'd be no questions asked. Dig up there"—cursing him—"or I'll let go!"

With his left hand Bud opened the money-drawer and hurriedly picked out the money and laid it on the shelf beside the sheriff.

"Thanks!" grunted that officer, with a nod. His gun increased its pressure under the belt. "I don't know whether Whit is dead. If he is, you won't need any money or anything else much over an hour. Look out there! Will those faces fight *for* you—or to *get* you? It'll take more'n me and you to hold that mob off. But if he lives—and you want to live—give me your word right now you'll pay a committee of citizens forty a week to run the *Concentrator* for six months."

He spoke so low that those at the door could not even hear his voice. His gun screwed deeper into its dent. His eyes began to sparkle with what to Bud seemed insanity—the will-power and resolution of another man.

"You've still your gun on, remember. There'll be no questions asked. Promise and, if he lives, keep your word, or——"

"I promise," mumbled Bud.

"Thanks. I'll take your gun now. If they come for you I'll give it back."

And he relieved Bud of the weapon and pocketed the money. They were hearing some husky, resonant voice addressing the crowd. The sheriff hurried to the door, ordering Bud to remain where he was.

"What is it?" asked the sheriff at the door.

"It's ole McNearney. He says Doc Craver says Whit'll get well—got it through the right shoulder—a lung nipped—but it'll take a month of nursing, and Jane and Alec's going to git married to-morrow so's they can take care of him together."

The sheriff elbowed outside where he could hear distinctly.

"And, now, gentlemen," came the Irishman's voice, "I move that we adjourn to the town hall at once and organize that Board of Trade."

"Git a contract outta Bud first!" shouted some one.

"Attention, all!" thundered the sheriff, stepping forth into an open space in the trail. "Organize your Board of Trade. But don't worry about the finances. The judgment's paid. And Bud guarantees the whole forty a week for six months. And, as Whit will get well, I'll not take Bud down to Central but will leave him here in your custody as a pledge of the fulfilment of his contract. All, now, come on in and have one on me!"

THE purple-cloud mountains were tipped with old rose. The smoke trail was still there.

"And as I sat there on the platform, holding Whit's head while Craver and Jane worked with the wound—sat there and heard that sheriff—Whit's faith became mine. His 'old gods,' as I had dubbed them, had acted as he knew they would—like lightning when the time came. And the old *Concentrator* pulled the business."

"And so," cried one of the guests, "that was old Whit that always wrote the leader for your Sunday edition?"

"Yes. It was he that came East with me and made my twenty thousand forty and told me what to do and how to do it and who kept my 'feet off that stock.' He stayed with me until he had piloted the paper into safe waters and then, you know, three years ago he passed on. 'I am resigning, Alec,' he said, 'to accept a bigger position.' And just before his last breath—I thought he had already gone—he brightened up and smiled and whispered, with the last of his old fire, 'Keep your feet off that stock.' "

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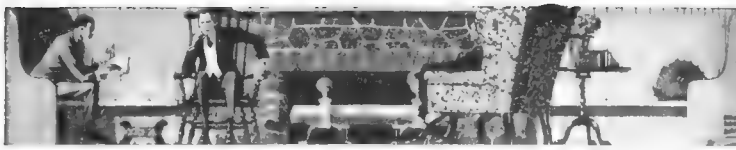

Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

TO THE young author made disconsolate by the rejection of his manuscript we commend these words of Samuel Merwin, author of "Peter Bell Ivor on Broadway" (page 3).

My own work, all of it, grows rapidly more real and more serious to me. The dozens and scores of stories that I hope in time to write are like young trees in a nursery. All must be thought over and cared for. And then there is the sometimes appalling problem of learning to write. I've been at it for thirty years, and am only now beginning to think at times that I see a little of the light. It's a long business, and life is short. I see some splendid stories ahead, if only I don't spoil them in the doing. The effort to be equal to them as they come along is the great thing. It's a fight all the time. And a man must prepare his life for writing.

WHAT is a man's best time? Mr. Merwin answers:

One solace I find—it's a great thing to have lasted through the long apprenticeship of the turbulent twenties and the intermediate and somewhat leaden thirties into middle age. Too much has been said about youth. Middle age and on is the time! Then is when the important work is done; then shoulders are seasoned to the burdens they must carry; then the greater things are perceived and coped with. Not until then do we know that there is still time to do the thing right—the next thing.

L. PATRICK GREENE, author of "His Own People" (page 75), was a sixteenth child and began life under the handicap of being christened "Louis Montague." But he has outgrown all that. He is now plain "Lewis Patrick," weighs two hundred pounds and writes a good story. But let him tell his own tale.

Was headed for the Church, but at the age of eighteen I took the bit in my teeth and went to Rhodesia, South Africa, and served with the British South African Company—Rhodes' pet project. Saw a great deal of that "best of all Big Game Land," and learned not a little about the natives. Came to America from England in 1913, and have turned my hand to most everything. Pushed a wheelbarrow up an inclined plank at twenty-five cents an hour, sold stock, canvassed and addressed meetings on behalf of woman-suffrage; social worker for four years, free-lanced, and almost starved for two years on an island off the Maine coast.

Married—two children. The older, six years, is beautiful and resembles her mother. The younger, six weeks, is also beautiful and resembles, so folks say, her father. I'm not sleeping very well, or late, nowadays. But they're lots of fun; aren't they?

CEYLON HOLLINGSWORTH, author of "The Power of the Press" (page 162), has the distinction of having kept four careers all going at the same time. He says:

I have had a career as a mining man, one as a newspaper man, one as an artist and another as a promoter, but always in all a free lance, and living them in a way all at the same time. My first story was printed in a Sunday paper when I was eighteen.

In regard to my Western stories, I know the life of the prospector and that of the log-prospect camps of Colorado, for I lived it. Lord save us—yes! I was a very young newspaper man and the tenderest of tenderfeet when I began learning the mountain ranges and sage-brush desert and cattle-country—and the men of them—clear to the Utah and Wyoming lines.

MR. HOLLINGSWORTH believes that the short story is the greatest vehicle for America's literary expression.

And I carry a battle-ax for the man who sniffs at the short story, and I don't hesitate to use it. There never will be a "great American novel" written about the life here of to-day, nor of the many yesterdays, nor of the to-morrow. The country is too vast and the life too likewise and varied and sectional. But a genius will come some day who will reveal the heights and power of the short story and produce great and permanent volumes on American life.

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Ceylon Hollingsworth, author of "The Power of the Press" in this issue.

THERE is a significant statement in the "Chimney Corner" contribution of Elizabeth Irons Folsom, author of "The Moving Finger" (page 89). "Everything is worth attention and entertains," she says. "Life has not yet commenced to bore me." She goes on:

I was born in Illinois into a world apparently all fiction-writers. My grandfather, David D. Irons, was a regular contributor to the famous old *Waverly Magazine*. My father wrote fiction for a living, and before I could comfortably hold up a story paper, I was lying on the floor on top of it to get best at its contents. For fourteen years I held the position of court reporter for the *Pantograph*, daily newspaper at Bloomington, Illinois. Read law at that time. My first fiction was published in 1915. Am wildly excited about life, and enthusiastic about what it offers, from the splendors of the big cities to tramping ten miles at a stretch and sleeping out in the mountains. Live in New York city.

WHILE he was still a boy, Ralph Durand announced his intentions of earning his living with his pen.

His family were aghast at an idea that in their eyes meant lifelong starvation in a garret, so they shipped him off to Australia to fend for himself and cure himself of his vain ambitions. Since then he has been cowboy, miner, plowman, seaman, schoolteacher, novelist, and more other trades than he can recollect at short notice. His travels have taken him into the heart of central Africa and to within seventeen degrees of the North Pole, earning his living as he went along, and collecting materials for literary work. He has made money and lost it, but he considers that money was the least valuable of what the world had to give him.

WITH this issue, EVERYBODY'S discontinues the running of the story of a play.

The play takes space that might be filled by a short story, and we have come to the conclusion that, as a rule, an additional short story is more interesting than the digest of a play.

L. Patrick Greene, who says his chief ambition is to stay in one place long enough to complete the ceremony of becoming a full-blown American citizen.

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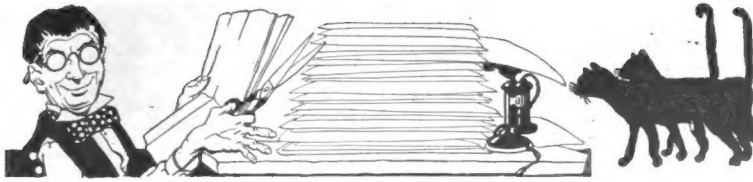

Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

(*Delavan, Ill., Times*)

Miss Goldie Vice spent the week-end with Mr. and Mrs. C. B. Willard.

I thought her name used to be "Gilded."

(*Delavan, Ill., Times*)

Born to Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Yentes at the Methodist Hospital in Peoria, on Tuesday, a baby girl.

Isn't that nice to have one born so young?

(*Delavan, Ill., Times*)

In the obituary of Mrs. Eliza Shurts last week, Mr. Allen Trone was named as a pall-bearer, which was a mistake. It should have been Mr. J. F. Meeker.

Well, that *is* more in keeping.

(*Delavan, Ill., Times*)

Fred Bockwitz is passing through a stiff siege of influenza.

Just wait, Fred, until it begins to soften up.

(*Adv. in Chicago Tribune*)

Let us figure on your office furniture.
(MISS M. E. S.)

Not much; mine's all initialed up now.

(*Windham, Conn., Observer*)

Fifteen dined at M. E. Lewis's Thanksgiving day and devoured turkey, including ex-Mayor Marcy and family.

Oh, marcy!

(*Circleville, Ohio, Herald*)

George Pancake, of Columbus, assisted the Antill Manufactory in preparing home-made candies for the Xmas trade.

One good turn deserves another.

(*In Follett, Texas, schoolroom*)

"Henry, why are you late this morning?"
"Because the bell rang before I got here."

'Sfairenuf.

(*Sign on Chicago bakery*)

MA'S BAKERY.
POP ON ICE.

He's usually in hot water.

("*Helpful Hints in English*")

The singular (woman) is commonly preferred, as "The Woman's (not Women's) Christian Temperance Union." Woman, soused, is generic.

I'll say she's all of that.

(*Newport News, Va., Times-Herald*)

FOR SALE—One bull puppy, one U. S. slicing-machine, one top wagon and harness. J. E. WOOD, 2615 Roanoke Avenue, 'Phone 475. (L. L. J.)

"All-Hots! Have an All-Hot?"

(*Seattle Daily Times*)

TO RENT—Apartment, 5 Rooms and speeling-porch, completely furnished. (MRS. H. T.)

Well, *you* tell me!

(*Owentown, Ky., News-Herald*)

I have two new closed cars, and am prepared to do a general taxi service. H. C. ALLNUTT.

Who'll take the first chance?

(*Albany, N. Y., Times-Union*)

Miss Clara A. Stannard, of 61 Springfield Avenue, and Charles H. Cavanaugh, of Westernville, N. Y., were married in Albany Wednesday by Rev. David Paton. They were unattended. The bride wore blue satin. The bridegroom is a carpenter.
(K. D. S.)

Bright and gloom.

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(*Head-line in Chicago Chamber of Commerce*)

SHRINKAGE OF RUBBER HOSE

What! Now going *back* on us?

(*Waterford, Pa., Leader*)

The bridal party was driven to the P. & E. Station in autos to the music of tin cans tied to the rear of the auto.

So no one would know the make of car they went in.

(*Boston American*)

WANTED—Man to go South with $2000. 'Phone, Beach 4965. (B. MCC.)

Line forms on this side.

(*Table of Contents, Saturday Evening Post*)

THE SELF-MADE WIFE—(In four parts)
BACKBONE—(Fifth Part) (F. H.)

I'd call that about nine-tenths.

(*Birmingham, Ala., News*)

RABBITS—Flemish Giants, largest and most profitable of all breeds. Sacrificing some of my finest on account of ill health. 2013 Ave G. (P. H. P.)

Better hurry. They may not live long.

(*Chicago Tribune*)

To the "Friend of the People"—Kindly tell me if a woman with a baby suing for divorce is entitled to her husband's bonus if he receives any, that is, part of it, or is the child alone entitled to part of it after the divorce. M. O. M.

The soldier collects if he is alive. TRIBUNE LAW DEPARTMENT.

Wonderful! WONDERFUL! Gee! How I wish *I'd* taken a correspondence law course!

(*Georgetown, Ky., Times*)

WANT TO JOIN A BAND?

Every town ought to have a good band. Georgetown ought. Any young man in or near Georgetown has the opportunity to join a band that is being organized. No experience or knowledge of music is necessary as this band will start its training soon.

BOUGHT HOUSE IN PARIS

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sidener, of Georgetown, have purchased a house on Vine Street, Paris, and have taken possession.

The first to get away; probably got *wind* of what was coming.

(*Boston Traveler*)

JUST LIKE DAVID HANDLED SAMSON. (A. D. A.)

And after telephoning to Noah to have the ark ready, he eloped with Goliath.

(*Scranton, Pa., Republican*)

PROSECUTION BASES CASE ON POST-MORTEM STATEMENTS OF WOMAN HE KILLED.

Sure, it's dead *men* that tell no tales—one reason why so many widows marry again.

(*Owentown, Ky., News-Herald*)

Miss Celestia O'Bryan and Mr. Cecil Shannon were married at the County Clerk's office, Wednesday, Judge J. L. W. Slaughter officiating.

Led to the slau-altar, alright, alright!

(*New York American*)

Thanksgiving day, although celebrated quietly, was none the less an occasion for rejoicing at the White House. Attorney-General Daugherty was the only dinner-guest and there were no collars. (C. C. M.)

Even Laddie Boy appeared *décolleté*.

(*Follett, Texas, Limelight*)

The evening was spent in playing game after game of unusual merit, after which the several sweet songsters "rounded up" their voices and filled the atmosphere with such dreamy airs as "Till We Meet," "The Long, Long Trail." It was fine, simply immense, and those who were listening were enchanted by the melody that fell in little lumps about them. After the last tap of the bell, the merry crowd of leaguers departed for their various homes, feeling as though they had performed one of the largest stunts of the year, and they did.

***I'll* say they did!**

(*Burwood Burrs, in Duncan, Okla., Eagle*)

Mrs. Cora Woods spent Sunday with Mrs. Ben Woods.

Mrs. Cora Wade visited her mother, Mrs. M. E. Woods, Saturday.

W. A. Woods and his son Rosco and C. E. West motored to Duncan, Saturday.

Rosco Woods and Emet Taylor went to Roberson, Sunday.

Misses Myrtle and Armada Woods spent Friday afternoon with Miss Oma Woods.

Miss Oma Woods spent Saturday evening with Miss Minnie Woods at Royal.

Miss Minnie Woods spent Saturday night and Sunday at home with Mrs. Ben Woods.

Chips that pass in the night.

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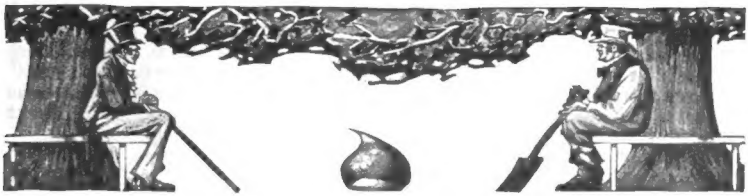

Everybody's Chestnut Tree

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

THE Dooleys finally decided to cross the Atlantic from Ireland in search of an easier and better living. The entire family, with the exception of the eldest child, Michael, was engaged in packing its belongings. Enter Michael.

"Father," said he, "I'm not going to America wid ye."

"Faith an' why not, me boy? 'Tis a grand country, I'm told, an' why do ye not wish to come, Michael?"

"I've been talkin' to Father Riley," the lad replied, "and he says that whin 'tis twelve o'clock wid us here 'tis seven in the morning in America."

"An' what of it?"

"Well, father, sure an' 'tis yehself that knows I'm a hearty eater, an' be all that's good, 'tis more than I could do to wait that long for me dinner."

THE prosecuting attorney for a county along the Wabash River in Indiana was endeavoring to convict a prisoner for "gigging" (spearing fish through holes in the ice).

One of the witnesses was a lank, silent Hoosier who was "agin' the government." In fact, his farm lay along the river, and he himself was very fond of fishing.

"Mr. Smith," asked the attorney, "did you see the holes in the ice?"

"I did," Mr. Smith answered.

"Did they appear to be fresh holes?" continued the attorney.

"Well, I dunno," replied the farmer. "I couldn't just tell whether they were this year's holes or last year's."

JOSEPH CUMMINGS CHASE, the well-known painter, was arrested for speeding, and he says he told the judge this story, which he further alleges caused his discharge:

A negro was arrested for speeding in the South.

"How fast were you going, Sam?" the court asked.

"Ah don't 'zactly know, sah," Sam replied, "but Ah was goin' tol'able fast."

"Thirty miles?"

"Yas, sah; Ah was goin' more dan dat."

"Forty miles?"

"Oh yas, sah; Ah was goin' more dan forty. Ah was goin' seventy. Ah always does mah seventy."

"What kind of a car have you?"

"A Ford."

"You don't mean to tell me you could make seventy miles an hour in a Ford? That's impossible!"

"Oh, no, sah: 'tain't im[illegible]ible. Ah always makes mah seven[illegible]is is one o' dem special Fords. H[illegible] a Ford body and—Pierce-Arrow glands."

ANDY carried the mail to a neighboring village in a small one-seated wagon. One day, there having been a death on his route, he was bringing the casket for the burial, and also had a lady passenger. There was no place to accommodate her except the top of the casket; so Andy started out with his passenger seated thereon. Before long he was hailed by a man with:

"Hi, there, Andy! The corpse is out!"

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THE Reverend Percy Stickney Grant, of the Church of the Ascension, New York city, tells a story about a bishop friend of his who delivered a sermon at a lunatic asylum. The bishop was a bit doubtful as to how the audience of lunatics would receive him, but as he got along into his sermon, he was agreeably surprised. The congregation gave him the closest attention. In the third row there was a man who seemed particularly interested. His eyes never once left the face of the bishop. Thirty minutes went by with the congregation still attentive. Then forty minutes. The bishop, under the spell of his audience, so warmed to his subject that he forgot all about the time. Sixty minutes passed. The man in the third row looked hard at the speaker, and his lips began to move.

"Cut it out; cut it out; cut it out," he said rapidly, over and over again.

The bishop wound up quickly and sat down, feeling that all had not gone as well as he had been led to expect at the beginning of his sermon. A crowd gathered round, shaking his hand and congratulating him, much to his surprise. The superintendent of the institution told him what a wonderful sermon he had preached, what a wonderful help it had been to the inmates.

"Why, you saved at least one life," he went on. "You remember that man in the third row. Those were the first sane words he had uttered in twenty years."

IN A small country town where kerosene-oil lamps are still used for lighting purposes, the mother of a wee girlie sat at a window of her home one evening with the child in her lap.

Near by, on a table, stood a lamp, lighted but flickering.

"What's the matter wiv the lamp, muvver?" lispingly queried the baby.

"Mother has run out of oil and must wait until daddy comes home, when he will fetch some with him, darling," answered the mother.

The child then turned her attention to the out of doors, her eyes raised to a brightly shining moon. As she looked, a cloud floated over the face of it.

"Look at the moon, muvver!" said the child. "It's all dark. I fink Dod must have run out of oil and tan't light it."

THERE was present at a dance a boastful young disciple of the caveman method of dealing with women, and his technique and language were not made softer by the punch served at the affair.

Late in the evening—or maybe it was morning—when he felt that the world and the girl with him at that moment were his, she was asked by another man to dance.

"Beat it—and beat it sudden, bo; nothing doin'!" said the caveman. "I was welter-weight champion at my college; and nobody's goin' to horn in here—see?"

The newcomer was still trying to think of a suitable reply when the girl chimed in sweetly:

"So you *were* welter-weight champion, eh? Well, it's too bad that you have degenerated into a *light-weight*."

A TRAVELING salesman from the North, while spending a few days in Atlanta recently on business, decided he would like to try a little of the local moonshine, about which he had heard so much. With very little difficulty he secured a pint of the "white lightning" and retired to his room to sample it. One taste was enough. It was a particularly villainous decoction. He did not care to throw it away, so he presented it to an old darky who had been driving him about the city.

The next day he asked the old negro how he liked the liquor.

"Boss, it was 'zackly right. Yes, suh; it was jus' 'zackly right."

"What do you mean by 'just exactly right'?"

"Well, suh," said the darky, "it was jus' 'zackly right, 'cause if it had 'a' been any better, you wouldn't 'a' give it to me, an' if it had 'a' been any worse, I couldn't 'a' drunk it."

IT WAS simply impossible to eat Mrs. Newlywed's cake, and hubby told her so.

"Please remember that you did not wed a cook," she replied haughtily.

Late that night a suspicious sound was heard in the house.

"Jim! Jim!" exclaimed Mrs. Newlywed. "Get up at once! I'm sure there are burglars."

"Get up yourself," came the muttered reply from beneath the blankets. "You didn't marry a policeman."

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